



Isaac Barrow D.D.

Lud. Du Guernier sculp.



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OF
CONTENTMENT,
Patience and Resignation
TO THE
WILL *of* GOD.
IN SEVERAL
SERMONS.

By ISAAC BARROW, D. D.
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L O N D O N.

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OF
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TO THE

VILL OF



THOMAS BARNARD, D.D.
Commons Master of the College in
Cambridge

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To Her Royal Highness the
PRINCESS *ANNE*
O F
DENMARK.

MADAM,



THE Acceptance
his late Majesty
of Glorious Cle-
mency vouchfa-
fed to some surviving Ser-
mons of this Author, my
deceased Son, encourages
me to beg the like from
Your Royal Highness,
now that I am to expose
ano-

The Epistle Dedicatory.

another of his Productions, as a little *Moses* in a paper Ark, and I hope the Subject of these Discourses (*Contentment, Patience, Resignation*) will not render them an improper Present; for, as all Loyal Subjects rejoice in, and thereby in some measure partake of, the Prosperities of the Royal Family; so, Your Royal Highness's Goodness, which crowns the other Felicities of Your Person and Fortune, will not permit You to be exempted

The Epistle Dedicatory.

empted from a Sympathy with their Condition, whom the Harmony of Divine Providence requires to move in a lower Sphere. May Your Royal Highness never have the Occasion to exercise the Virtues of the Afflicted, but only the Opportunity to Pity and Relieve them, shall ever be the hearty Prayer of,

*Your Royal Highness's
most Humble, and
most Obedient Servant,*

Tho. Barrow.

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OF



O F
CONTENTMENT.

The First SERMON.

PHIL. IV. II.

* I have learned in whatever state I am,
therewith to be content.

IN these Words, by the Example of an eminent Saint, is recommended to us the Practice of an excellent Duty, or Virtue: A Practice in it self most worthy, very grateful to God, and immediately of great Benefit to our selves; being indeed
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neces-

Εγὼ γὰρ ἔμαθον ἐν οἷς εἰμι, αὐτάρκης εἶναι.

necessary toward the comfortable Enjoyment of our Lives. It is Contentedness, the Virtue which of all other doth most render this World acceptable, and constituteth a kind of Temporal Heaven; * which he that hath, is thereby *ipso facto* in good measure happy, whatever other things he may seem to want; which he that wanteth, doth, however otherwise he be furnished, become miserable, and carrieth a kind of Hell within him; it cannot therefore but well deserve our best study about it, and care to get it: In imitation of S. Paul, who *had learned in whatever state he was, therein to be content.*

In Discourfing upon which Words I shall consider two Particulars; first, the Virtue itself (Contentedness in every State) the Nature of which I shall endeavour to explain; then the way of attaining or producing it, implied by S. Paul in the words, *I have learned.*

I. For explication of the Virtue: The word here expressing it is, *αὐτάρκεια*, which signifieth Self-sufficiency, or having enough of ones self; the which is not to be under-

* Τὸ δ' αὐτάρκεια τί δεῖται, ὁ μὲν ἄνθρωπος αἰρετὸν πάλαι
 ἔχει, καὶ μὴ δυνάμενος ἐνδεῶς. Arist. Eth. I. 7.

Serm. I. *Of Contentment.*

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derstood absolutely, * as if he took himself to be independent in Nature, able to subsist of himself, not wanting any Support or Comfort without himself (for this is the Property and Privilege of the great *El-shaddai*, who alone subsisteth of himself, needing toward his Being and Felicity nothing without himself; this is repugnant to the Nature of Man, who is a Creature essentially dependent for his Being and Subsistence, indigent of many things for his Satisfaction and Welfare) but relatively, considering his present State, the Circumstances wherein he was, and the Capacities he had; which by God's disposal and Providence were such, that he could not want more than he had in his Possession, or Reach. He meant not to exclude God and his Providence; but rather supposed that, as the ground and cause of his Self-sufficiency; according as elsewhere he expresseth it: † *Not as if we were sufficient of our selves, but our sufficiency is of God*: Nor did he intend to exclude the need of other Creatures, otherwise than as considered without his Possession,

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or

* Τὸ εὐδαιμονεῖν ἀπέχεν δὲ πάντα ἀδελφί, πληρωμένῳ τινι εὐκέραι· ἔδιδος δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸν, ὅδε λόγος. Arr. 3. 24.

† 2 Cor. 3. 5.

or beyond his Power; but he meaneth only, that he did not desire or lack more than what God had supplied him with; had put into his Hand, or had set within his reach; that his Will did sute to his State, his Desire did not exceed his Power.

This is the meaning of the Word which the Apostle useth; but for the more full and clear Understanding the Virtue it self, we shall first consider the Object, about which it is Conversant, then the several Acts which it requireth, or wherein the Exercise thereof consisteth.

I. The Object of Contentedness is the present State of things whatever it be (whether prosperous or adverse, of eminency or meanness, of abundance or scantiness) wherein by Divine Providence we are set: *τὰ ἐν οἷς ἵσμεν*, *the things in which we are*, that is, our present Condition, with all its Circumstances; so it may be generally supposed, considering that it is ordinary, and almost natural for Men (who have not learned as *S. Paul* had done, or are not instructed and exercised in the Practice of this Duty) to be dissatisfied and disquieted in every State; to be always in want of something; to find defects in every Fortune, to fancy they may be in better case, and to desire it earnestly: If we estimate things wisely, rich Men

Serm. I. Of Contentment.

Men are more liable to Discontent than poor Men. It is observable, that Prosperity is a peevish thing, and Men of highest Fortune are apt most easily to resent the smallest things: a little Neglect, a slight Word, an displeasing Look doth affect them more, than Reproaches, Blows, Wrongs do those of a mean Condition.

Prosperity is a nice and squeamish thing, and it is hard to find any thing able to please Men of a full and prosperous State, which being incapable of bettering in substantial things, they can hardly find Matter of solid delight. Whereas a poor Estate is easily comforted by the Accession of many things which it wanteth: A good Meal, a small Gift, a little Gain, or good Success of his Labour, doth greatly please a poor Man with a very solid Pleasure; but a rich Man hath nothing to please him but a new Toy, a puff of Applause, success at a Horse-race, at Bowls, at Hunting; in some petty Sport and Pastime, which can yield but a very thin and transitory Satisfaction to any Man not quite brutified and void of Sense; whence Contentedness hath place, and is needful in every Condition, be it in appearance never so prosperous, so plentiful, so pleasant. * In

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the

the fulness of his sufficiency, he shall be in straits.

The formal Object thereof may indeed seem to be a † Condition distastful to our Sense, or cross to our Fancy; an adverse or strait Condition; a Condition of Poverty, of Disgrace, of any great Inconvenience or Distress incident to us in this World; but since the most Men are absolutely in such a Condition exposed to so many Wants and Troubles; since many more are needy comparatively, wanting the Conveniencies that others enjoy, and which themselves affect; since there are few, who in right Estimation are not indigent and poor, that is, who do not desire and fancy themselves to want many things* which they have not (for Wealth consisteth not so much in the Possession of Goods, as in apprehension of Freedom from Want, and in satisfaction of Desires) since Care, Trouble, Disappointment, Satiety and Discontent following them, do not only haunt Cottages, and stick to the lowest sort of People, but do even frequent Palaces, and pursue Men of highest Rank; therefore any State may be the Object of Contentedness; and the Duty is of a very general Concernment; Princes them-

† Chryf. Tom. 7. p. 68.

Serm. I. Of Contentment.

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themselves need to learn it; the Lessons teaching it, and the Arguments perswading it may as well sute the Rich and Noble, as the Poor and the Peasant; so our *Apostle* himself doth intimate in the Words immediately following our Text: * *I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: Every where, and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry; both to abound and to suffer need*; he had the Art not only to manage well both Conditions, but to be satisfied in either.

But seeing real Adversity, Poverty, and Disgrace have naturally the strongest influence in disturbing and disordering our Minds; that Contentedness is plainly most needful in such cases, as the proper Support, or Medicine of our Mind in them; that other states do need it only as they, by Fancy or Infirmary, do Symbolize or Conspire with these; therefore unto Persons in these states we shall more explicitly apply our Directions and Persuasions, as to the proper and primary subjects of Contentedness; the which by Analogy, or Parity of Reason, may be extended to all others, who from imaginary Wants and Distresses, do create displeasure to

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them-

* Phil. 4. 12.

themselves. So much for the Object, or the Subject of the Virtue.

2. The Acts, wherein the Practice thereof consisteth (which are necessary Ingredients, or constant Symptomes of it) belong either to the Mind and Understanding, or to the Will and Appetite, or to external Demeanour and Practice; being
 1. Right Opinions and Judgments of Mind. 2. Fit Dispositions and Affections of Heart. 3. Outward good Actions and Behaviours, in regard to our Condition, and the Events befalling us; the former being as the Root and Stock, the latter as the Fruits and the Flowers of the Duty: unto which may be reduced the Correspondent Negations, or Absence of bad Judgments, Affections and Deportments in respect to the same Objects.

(1.) As to our Opinions and Judgments of things, Contentedness requireth, that

1. We should believe our Condition, whatever it be, to be determined by God; and that all Events befalling us do proceed from him; at least that he permitteth and ordereth them, according to his Judgment and Pleasure; that
 * *Εὐὼ τῷ Θεῷ πᾶς καὶ γελᾷ, κ' ὠδύρεται*, all
 (as

* Soph. Aj. Lor. Lam. 3. 38. Amos 3. 6. 1 Kings 12. 15, 24.

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(as the Prophet singeth) both good and evil proceedeth out of the mouth of the most High; that Affliction (as Job said) cometh not forth of the Dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; as a thing arising spontaneously, or sowed by the hand of some Creature, but rather descendeth from him, who saith, ‡ I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I the Lord do all these things.

We are apt, when any thing falleth out unpleasant to us, to exclaim against * Fortune, and to accuse our Stars; or to inveigh against the second Causes, which immediately offend us, ascribing all to their Influence; which Proceeding doth argue in us a *Heathenish* Ignorance and Infidelity, or at least much Inconsiderateness and Impotency of Mind; that our Judgment is blinded and clouded, or perverted and seduced by ill Passions: for that in truth, there is not in the World any Occurrence merely Fortuitous, or Fatal, (all being guided and wielded by the powerful Hand of the All-wise and Almighty God) there is no Creature which in its Agency doth not depend on God, as the Instrument of his Will, or subordinate thereto. Where-

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fore

‡ Ef. 45. 7. * *Atque Deos, atque astra vocat criminis mater.*

fore upon every Event, we should, raising our Minds above all other Causes, discern and acknowledge God's hand; as *David* did, when *Shimei* cursed him: † *Let him* (said the good King) *Curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David*; as *Job* did, when he was rifled of his Goods, * *The Lord* (said he) *gave, and the Lord hath taken away*; as our Saviour did, when in regard to the sore hardships he was designed to undergo, he said, ‡ *The Cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink?*

2. Hence we should always judge every thing which happeneth to be thoroughly good and fit, || worthy (all things considered) to be appointed, or permitted by that Sovereign Governour of things; not entertaining any harsh Thoughts of God, as if he were not enough Wise, Just or Benign, in ordering us to be afflicted or crossed; but taking all Occurrences to be well consistent with all God's Holy Perfections and Attributes.

We are apt to conceit, that the World is ill ordered, when we do not thrive and prosper

† 2 Sam. 16. 10. * Job 1. 21. ‡ John 18. 11.

|| Παρεχωρήσωμεν τοίνυν ὀρθοκαλῶ ἰπῶ σοφῶ τῆ παντὸς κυβερνήτῃ, καὶ ἐρέξωμεν τὰ οἰκονομέματα, ὅποια ποτ' ἂν ᾖ, καὶν θυμέρη, καὶν λυπνηθ', &c. Theod. Ep. 136.

prosper therein ; † that every thing is irregular, which squareth not to the Models of our Fancy ; that Things had gone much better, if our Designs had found Success : but these are vain and perverse Conceits ; † for that certainly is most Good, which seemeth Good to God ; his Will is a perfect Standard of Right and Convenience ; his Eye never aimeth wrong, his Hand never faileth to hit the Mark of what is best ; * *All his paths are mercy and truth ; He is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works :* So did King Hezekiah rightly judge, when upon Denunciation of a sad Doom to his Country and Posterity, he replied to the Prophet : || *Good is the word of the Lord, which thou hast spoken ;* so even the Pagan Sage discerned, when he thus rebuked a Malecontent ; † *You slave, do you forsooth desire any thing, but what is best ? and is not that only best, which seemeth best to God ?*

3. We

† *Placeat homini quicquid Deo placuit.* Sen. Epist. 75.
 Στέργειν γὰρ χρὴ τὰ θεῶν ἢ ἀρήναι σοφίας πρυτανόμμενα, καὶ ταῦτα πάντως νομίζειν συμφέροντα.
 Theod. Ep. 15.

† Οἶδε γὰρ ὁ σοφὸς τὸ συμφέρον, καὶ ὡς ἀγαθὸς ὅτε τοῖς ἡμῖν περισμάλλεται. Id. Ep. 18.

* Psal. 25. 10. 145. 17. || 2 King. 20. 19.

† Ἀνδραποδον, ἄλλο γὰρ θέλεις, ἢ τὸ ἀμεινον· ἄλλο ἔν τι ἀμεινον ἢ τὸ θεῶν δοκῶν; Act. 11. 7.

3. We should even be satisfied in our Mind, that according to God's Purpose, all Events do tend and conduce to our particular Welfare; being not only Good to us as Members of the World, and in order to more General Ends, but serving toward our private Benefit and Advantage. We may be ready perhaps to confess, that whatever happeneth may be indeed just and fit in some distant and occult Respects, but hardly can we be induced to allow, that what we feel offensive to our Sense and Fancy, is really good for us, or was meant for our benefit; we cannot easily discern any thing of Love or Favour in such Matters: Those sort of *Aphorisms* in Holy Scripture, † *Happy is the man whom God correcteth; As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten*; sound strangely, and are huge *Paradoxes* to us; such is our blindness of Mind, and dulness of Apprehension: But God knoweth with so exact a Skilfulness to manage things, that every particular Occurrence shall be advantageous to the Person whom it toucheth; and accordingly to each one he dispenseth that which is most suitable to him; whence, as frequently it is necessary for our Good that we should be crossed (for that indeed other-
wise

† Job. 5. 17. Jam. 1. 12. Rev. 3. 19; Prov. 3. 12.

wife we should often much harm, sometime we should quite undo our selves) so it always, when God so ordereth it, is to be deemed most profitable and wholesome for us: We are therefore in Reason obliged to take the saddest Accidents, and sharpest Afflictions, coming upon us by Providence, to be no other than Fatherly Corrections, or friendly Rebukes, designed to render us good and happy; as Arguments therefore, and Instances of especial Good-will toward us; conceiving under every Dispensation, that we do as it were hear God speaking to us, as he did to those in the *Prophet*: † *I know the thoughts that I think towards you, thoughts of peace, and not of Evil, to give you an expected end.*

4. Hence we are to believe, that our present Condition (whatever it be to carnal or worldly sense) is in right Judgment, all all things considered, the best; most proper, most desirable for us; better than we, if it were at our discretion and choice, should put our selves into; for that God, * *(the Saviour of all men, who desireth that no man should perish; who is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works; who exceedingly tendreth the welfare of his*

† Jer. 29. 11. * 1 Tim. 2. 4. Ezek. 33. 11. 2 Pet. 3. 9. Psal. 145. 9.

his Children and Subjects) doth ever (here in this Life, the time of Merit and Trial) with a most wise Good-will design our best Good; and by the most proper Methods (such as do best suite our Circumstances and Capacities) doth aim to draw us unto Happiness; and accordingly doth assign a Station for us most befitting, in order to that great end; we therefore should think ourselves well placed, because we are where God doth set us, that we have enough, because we have what God allotteth us.

There are other more particular Judgments, which Contentedness involveth, or which are required toward it; such as these, That nothing Originally is due to us, but all cometh purely from Divine Favour and Bounty; That all Adversities are justly and deservedly inflicted on us, as the due Wages, or Natural Fruits of our Sins; That our Happiness dependeth not on any present Enjoyments or Possessions, but may well subsist without them; That a Competency (or so much as sufficeth to maintain our Life without intolerable Pain) ought to satiate our desires; but these, and the like Judgments will come opportunely to be considered as Motives to the Practice of the Duty.

(2.) From such Acts of our Mind, or intellectual Part concerning things incident

Serm. I. *Of Contentment.* 15

dent to us, should proceed the following Dispositions of Will and Affection.

I. We should entertain all Occurrences, how grievous soever to us, with entire Submission, and Resignation of our will to the Will of God, wholly acquiescing in his good Pleasure; saying in our Hearts after our Lord; † *Let not my Will, but thine be done*; with good Eli, ‡ *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*; with David, § *Behold here I am, let him do to me as seemeth good to him*; even with Socrates, || *If so it pleaseth God, so let it be*; with Epictetus, * *I always chiefly will that, which cometh to pass*; for I account that better which God willeth, than what I will myself; I will adhere as a minister and follower to him; I pursue, I affect, I simply will with him: Looking upon them as sent from God, we should heartily bid them welcome, we should kindly embrace them, we should use them with all fair respect; † ἀπαράζεις τὰ συμβαινόντα (to hug, or kindly to embrace things incident) φιλεῖν τὰ ἀπονεμόμενα (to love things dispensed by Providence)

† Luk. 22. 42. ‡ 1 Sam. 3. 18. § 2 Sam. 15. 26.

|| Εἰ ταύτη θεοῖς φίλον, ταύτη γενέσθω.]

‡* Αὐτὸ μᾶλλον θέλω τὸ γινόμενον· κρεῖττον γὰρ ἡγᾶμαι, ὅ ὁ θεὸς θέλει, ἢ ἐγὼ προσκεῖσθαι διάκονος· ἢ ἀκόλουθόν ἐκείνου, σωορμῶ, ὁρέγομαι, ἀπλῶς σιωθέλω. † Arr. 3. 7. M. Anton. 3. 4. 2. 17. 10. 11. 12. 1.

dence) are Precepts, which even as dictated by Natural Reason, *Philosophers* do much inculcate.

This excludeth all rebellious Insurrections, and swellings of Mind against Providence; such as argue that we dislike God's Government, that were we able, we should struggle with God's Will; that we gladly would shake off his Yoke; all such ill Resentment and repining at our Lot, which maketh God's Hand grievous, and his Yoke uneasie to us; such Affections as the Wiseman toucheth, when he saith, † *The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord.*

2. We should bear all things with steady Calmness and Composeness of Mind, suppressing, or quelling those Tumults, those Storms, those Excesses of Passion, which the sense of things disgustful is apt to excite; such as are immoderate Grief, fierce Anger, irksome Despair, and the like. * No Adversity should so ruffle our Minds, as to defeat or pervert the use of our Reason, so as to hinder us from perceiving, or performing what becometh us, so as to engage us into any irregular, or unseemly Behaviour.

3. We

† Prov. 19. 3.

* Let no Man be moved by these Afflictions, *μὴ δυνάσῃται κινεῖσθαι* (i.e. *δυναστεῖται* Chryl.) 1 Thess. 3. 3.

3. We should indeed bear the worst Events with an εὐθυμία, that is, with a sweet and chearful disposition of Mind, * so as not to be put out of Humour; not to be dejected, or quite discouraged by them, not to fall into that *Heaviness* which (as the *Wiseman* saith) † *maketh the Heart of Man to stoop*; ‡ but rather finding Delight and Complacence in them, as considering whence they come, whither they aim and tend: Such was the Disposition and Demeanour of the || *Apostles* and *Primitive good Christians*, in the midst of their most grievous Adversities and Sufferings, * *they rejoiced*, &c. they did * † *take joyfully the spoiling of their Goods*, they did § *account it all joy, when they fell into divers Tribulations*; they were ‡* ὡς λυπόμενοι, ἀλλ' ὃ χαίροντες, *as grieved, but always rejoicing*; their State was grievous, but their Heart was constantly chearful. Such a constant Frame of Mind we should maintain, so continually prepared we should be

* Ἡ κτ' κόσμον λύπη θάνατον κατεργάζεται.
2 Cor. 7. 10.

† Prov. 12. 22.

‡ Εὐδοκῶ ἐν ἀθηνείαις, ἐν ὕβρεσι, ἐν ἀνάγκαις, ἐν στενοχωρίαις ὑπὲρ χρεῖσθ. 2 Cor. 12. 10.

|| Εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομονὴν, καὶ μακροθυμίαν μὲν χαίρει. Col. 1. 11.

* Act. 5. 41. * † Heb. 10. 34. § Jam. 1. 2.

‡* 2 Cor. 6. 10.

be against all Contingencies, that nothing should happen amiss to us, so as deeply to affect us, or to unsettle us in our Humour; that every Thing from God's Hand should be acceptable; that no Sadness may seize on us, at least that we do not indulge or cherish it; that in no wise we suffer any Regret to quench that spiritual Comfort and Joy in God, which * *becometh the upright* (as the *Psalmist* saith;) and which we are so † often enjoined perpetually to maintain, as in all Cases, so particularly under Afflictions and Tryals. We cannot indeed hardly be content, if we are not chearful: For it is hard to be altogether on the Suffering and Bearing hand, without any Pleasure: The Mind can hardly stand in a Poise, so as neither to Sorrow or Joy: We cannot digest Adversity, if we do not relish it; we shall not submit to it as his Will, if we do not take it for an argument of his Love: ‡ *ἐνδονῶ, I* (saith *S. Paul*) *have a liking or pleasure in Infirmities, in Reproaches, in Necessities, in Persecutions, in Distresses for Christ's Sake; for when I am weak then I am strong.*

4. We should with Faith and Hope rely and wait on God for the removal, or ease-

* Psal. 33. 1. 97. 12. † Phil. 4. 4. 3. 1. 2 Cor. 13. 11. 1 Pet. 4. 13. ‡ 2 Cor. 12. 10.

Serm. I. *Of Contentment.* 19

easement of our Afflictions; or however, we should confide in him for Grace, and Strength to support them well: As our Saviour did, when he prayed, *|| Father, if thou be willing, remove this Cup*; as they did in the Prophet, who said, *† In the way of thy Judgments, O Lord, we have waited on thee*; according to that Rule in the Lamentations; ** It is good that a Man should both hope, and wait quietly for the Salvation of the Lord*; and those Precepts in the Psalms; *†† Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him*; *wait upon the Lord, be of good Courage, and he shall strengthen thine Heart.*

We should in any Case be ready with the Holy Psalmist thus to interrogate, and sustain our selves: *‡ Why art thou cast down, O my Soul, why art thou so disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet Praise him for the Help of his Countenance.*

Remembring and considering, that (as we are expressly taught in Scripture, and as all our Religion doth clearly suppose) **‡ God knoweth to rescue the Godly out of Tribulation,* (he knoweth the proper Season, when

*|| Luke 22. 42. † Isa. 26. 8. 33. 2. * Lam. 3. 26.
 †† Psal. 37. 7. 24. 17. Psal. 40. 1. 33. 20. 62. 1. 25.
 3. 69. 6. 44. 19. 16. 8. ‡ Psal. 42. 2. *‡ 2 Pet. 2. 3.
 1 Pet. 5. 7.*

when it is fit to do it) that † *he is faithful, and will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will with the Temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it* ; reflecting, I say, on these certain Points of Christian Truth, we should never * *sorrow as those who are without Hope* ; we should never despair of a good riddance from our Adversity, when it shall be seasonable or beneficial for us ; || we should always be assured of a comfortable Support under it, which is usually better than deliverance from it ; our Minds should never sink into despondency or disconsolateness : That this is practicable in the worst Case, we have conspicuous Instances to assure us ; it hath been the Practice of most Illustrious and Excellent Persons, particularly of the Holy ‡ *Apostles* ; never was any Condition, in outward Respects and Appearance, more forlorn and dismal than was theirs ; yet it no-wise bereaved them of Hope, or Courage ; *We* (they could say) *are troubled on every side, yet not distressed ; we are perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed.*

5. We

† Mat. 6. 25. 1 Cor. 10. 13. * 1 Thess. 4. 13. || Isa. 40. 31. Mic. 7. 7. ‡ 2 Cor. 4. 8. 1 Cor. 4. 11.

5. We should indeed not so much as faint, or languish in our Minds, upon any such Occasion; no Adversity should impair the Forces of our Reason or our Spirit; should enervate our Courage, or slacken our Industry; should render us sick or weak in Heart; for, † *If (saith the Wise-man) thou faint in the Day of Adversity, thy Strength is small*; ('tis the sign of an infirm Mind) and μή ἐκκακῆν, *not to faulter or decay*, μή ἐκλύεσθαι, *not to be dissolved or disjoyned in our Souls* (as the Body is in scorbutick Distempers) are Rules prescribed to us in such Cases: * We do then indeed need a firm and robust Constitution of Soul; we should then bear up most resolutely and stoutly: The encouragement of *Moses* to the People, entering upon Battel, may well be accommodated to us, in regard to our conflict with Adversities; ‡ *Let not your Hearts faint, fear not and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them.*

6. We should not be weary of our Condition, or have irksome longings for Alteration; but with a quiet Indifferency and

† Prov. 24. 10. 2 Cor. 4. 16. Rev. 2. 3. 2 Thess. 3. 13. Gal. 6. 9. Heb. 12. 3.

* — nunc animis opus est, nunc pectore firmo.

‡ Deut. 20. 3.

and willingness of Mind lie under it, during God's Pleasure; according to the *Wise-man's* Advice; * *My Son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of his Correction*; and that of the *Apostle*, enforced by our *Lord's* Example; † *Consider him that endured such contradiction of Sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied, and faint in your Minds*. We should not think God slow, or his Time long and tedious, as if he were forgetful of us, or backward to Succour us; as the *Psalmist* was inclined to do, when in the Day of Trouble he brake forth into these Conceits and Expressions; || *Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will he be favourable no more; Is his Mercy clean gone for ever, doth his Promise fail for evermore; Hath God forgotten to be gracious; hath he in Anger shut up his tender Mercies?* Thus he in a sad Mood was apt to think and speak; but recollecting himself, he perceived it was his Error, and confessed it was his Fault thus to imagine; *I said, it was mine Infirmity*; and it will be ours likewise, if we entertain such Conceptions and Resentments: We should with the same Mind endure our present State, as we do pass through a hard Winter, or a time of foul Weather, taking it for

* Prov. 3. 11. † Heb. 12. 3. || Psal. 77. 7, 10.

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for seasonable and fit, because the wise Author of Nature hath so appointed and ordered it.

7. We should by adverse Accidents be rendred lowly in our own Eyes, and sober in our Conceits of our selves; meek and gentle, tender and pliable in our Temper and frame of Spirit; sensible of our Unworthiness and Meanness, of our natural Frailty, Penury and Misery, of our actual Offences and Miscarriages; deeply affected in regard to the awful Majesty and Power, to the perfect Holiness, and strict Justice of God: They should quell our haughty Stomach, they should supple our stiff Wilfulness, they should soften our hard Hearts, they should mitigate our peevish Humours; to effect these Things, is usually the design of such Accidents, and it is ever the best Fruit of them: This is that, which *S. Peter* adviseth to, when he saith, † *Be humbled under the mighty Hand of God*; which God approveth and encourageth with a gracious Promise, when he saith; — * *To this Man will I look, even to him that is of a poor and contrite Spirit, and trembleth at my Word*: This Disposition is an inseparable adherent to Contentedness; he that hath not his Spirit thus broken,
or

† 1 Pet. 5. 6. * Esa. 66. 2.

or mollified, will hardly be content in any State; he that is haughty in Conceit, and sturdy in Humour, will every where find that which will cross and disturb him.

8. It is required that we should, notwithstanding any Meanness, † any Hardness of our Condition, be meekly and kindly affected toward others, being satisfied and pleased with their more prosperous State. We should not be angry with the World, because we do not thrive or flourish in it; we should not be fullen or peevish toward any Man, because his Fortune is better than ours; we should not repine or grudge at the good Success of any of our Brethren, because we want the like our selves; * *We should rather rejoyce with those that rejoyce*; innocently filching some Pleasure from them, or borrowing some Satisfaction from their Enjoyments. It is *Humane* thus to do, because of the natural Cognation and Friendship of Men; it is more especially *Christian*, because of our spiritual Consanguinity; by vertue whereof we are so knit
together

† *Ita plerumque contingit, ut dum aliquos fratres nostros in quantulacunque requie constitutos in mediis nostris anxietatibus cogitamus, non parva ex parte recreemur, tanquam & nos idem ipsi quietius tranquilliusque vivamus.* Aug. Epist. 144.

* Rom. 12. 15.

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together, and made * *members to each other*, that if (as St. Paul telleth us) *one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, and if one member be honoured, all the members should rejoice with it*: We can hardly be content without thus appropriating the Goods, and sharing in the Delights of others: He can never be content, who looketh *with an evil eye* upon other Mens Prosperity; he cannot do well himself, who loveth not to see his Neighbour do well; numberless occasions will happen to discompose and vex him.

Adversity impatiently born is apt to sour our Spirits, and render us froward toward Men; especially when it proceedeth from the Unkindness, Ingratitude, or Treachery of Friends, or of Persons obliged to us for our good Will, or for Benefits done to them; but nothing should render us unkindly disposed toward the World, nothing should extinguish Charity in us toward any Man; so plain Reason teacheth us, so great Examples enforce: *Moses* did not lose his Affection towards his Countrymen, because he was by one of them threatned away into Banishment and Vagrancy; the *Apostles* be-

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* Rom. 12. 15. 1 Cor. 12. 26.

came not disaffected to the World, because it misused and persecuted them; our Lord did continue most earnestly to desire, and laboriously to endeavour the good of those who most despitefully used him; like theirs, in all cases, should our Disposition be; we should ever observe the *Psalmist's* Advice; * *Cease from anger, forsake wrath, fret not thy self in any wise to do evil.*

Again,

9. Contentedness doth imply a freedom from all solicitude and anxiety of Mind, in reference to Provision for our Needs and Conveniencies of Life; according to those Rules and Precepts of † *casting our burthen and care upon the Lord, of being careful for nothing, but commending our affairs to God's ordering*; according to that most comfortable Precept of our Lord, || *Take no care, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or how shall we be cloathed; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye want all these things*: If we do not thus, it is hardly possible that we should be content; if we do not depend on Providence, we cannot escape being often distracted with Care, and perplexed with Fear; we cannot

* Psal. 37. 8. † 1 Pet. 5. 7. Psal. 37. 5. 55. 23.
Phil. 4. 6. || Matt. 6. 31.

not chearfully hope for any thing we need, nor be quietly secure of any thing we possess.

10. It requireth also that we should curb our Desires, and confine them in the narrowest bounds we can; * so as not to affect more in quantity, or better in quality than our Nature and State do require; if we must have superfluities, if we can only relish Dainties, we shall never be pleated; † for as Nature hath limits, and is content with little; as there is no state in this World, the Exigencies whereof may not be answered with a competence; so curiosity is an infinite and insatiable Thing: ‡ *He that loveth Pleasure shall be a poor Man; he that loveth Wine and Oil shall not be rich*; that is, †† he which is curious and nice in his Desires, will never have enough: The Rule which (according to St. Paul) should regulate our Desires, is this; || *Having Food and Rayment, let us with them be satisfied*: ‡ If this will

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* Ἡδίστα πολυτελείας ἀπολαύουσιν οἱ ἥκιστα ταύτης δεόμενοι. Epic. and Menæc.

† *Ventre nihil novi frugalius.* Juv. Sat. 5.

‡ Prov. 21. 17.

†† Αἱ χεῖρες οὐσιν ὀρέξεις αὐταρκείᾳ περιεργεῖται. Cl. Alex. Pad. 2. 1. || 1 Tim. 6. 8.

‡ Si ad naturam vivas, nunquam eris pauper; si ad opinionem, nunquam dives. Epic. Sen. Ep. 16.

satisfie us, we may easily obtain Satisfaction; a moderate Industry, with God's Blessing, will procure so much; God hath promised to bestow it; if this will not suffice, there is no sure Way of getting or keeping more: As God is no-wise obliged to provide us Superfluities, or concerned to relieve our extravagant Longings; so we may fear, that Providence will be ready to cross us in our Cares and Endeavours tending to those Purposes; so that we shall be disappointed in the procurement, or disturbed in the fruition of such needless Things: However, he that is most scant in his Desires, is likely to be most content in his Mind: * *He (as Socrates said) is nearest the Gods (who need nothing) that needeth fewest things.*

In fine, Contentedness doth import, that whatever our Condition is, our Mind and Affections should be modelled and squared just according to it; so that our Inclinations be compliant, our Desires be congruous thereto, so that easily we can comport with the Inconveniencies, can relish the Comforts, can improve the Advantages sticking thereto; otherwise, like

* Ὁ ἐλαχίστων δεόμενος, ἔγγιστα θεῶν. Socr. in Xenoph. *Apomn.* 3.

an ill-made Garment, it will fit unhand-
somely upon us, and be troublesome to us.
It is not usually our Condition it self, but
the unsuitableness thereof to our Disposi-
tion and Desires (which sowreth all its
Sweets, and rendreth its Advantages fruit-
less) that createth discontent; for (altho'
it be very mean) others bear the same
cheerfully; many would be glad thereof;
if therefore we will be content, we must
bend our Inclinations, and adapt our De-
sires to a Correspondence with our State.

If we are Rich, we should get a large
and bountiful Heart, otherwise our Wealth
will hang loose about us; the Care and
Trouble in keeping it, the Suspicion and
Fear of losing it, the Desire of ampli-
fying it, the Unwillingness to spend or
use it, will bereave us of all true Satis-
faction therein, and render it no less un-
favoury to us, than unprofitable to o-
thers.

If we are Poor, we should have a fru-
gal, provident, industrious Mind, sparing
in Desires, free from Curiosity, willing to
take Pains, able to digest Hardships, other-
wise the straitness of our Condition will
pinch and gall us.

Are we high in Dignity or Reputation?
We then need a Mind well ballasted with
sober Thoughts, otherwise the wind of

Vanity will drive us into absurd Behaviours, thence will dash us upon Disappointments, and consequently will plunge us into Vexation and Discontent.

Are we mean and low? We need a meek and lowly, a calm and steady Spirit; not affecting little Respects, or resenting the want of them; apt to pass over or to bear quietly petty Affronts and Neglects; not apt to be moved by Words signifying Contempt or Disdain; else (being fretted with such Things, which in this ill-natur'd and hard-hearted World we may be sure often to meet with) we shall be uneasie in our Minds, and impatiently wish a Change of our State.

These, and the like Dispositions and Affections of Soul this Duty containeth or requireth: From hence should arise a correspondent external Demeanour, and such Actions as these which follow.

1. We should restrain our Tongues from all unseemly and unfavoury Expressions, implying dissatisfaction in God's Proceedings, or displeasure at his Providence; arguing desperation or distrust in God; such as were those of the discontented and impatient *Israelites*; * *They* (saith the *Psalmist*)

* Psal. 78. 19. Num. 21. 5.

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Psalmist) spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a Table in the Wilderness? behold he smote the Rock that the Waters gushed out, and the Streams overflowed; can he give Bread also, can he provide Flesh for his People? Such as they used, of whom the Prophet saith, * *When they shall be hungry, they will fret themselves, and curse their King and their God; as those in the Apocalypse, who being afflicted with deserved Judgments, † did blaspheme the Name of God, which had power over those Plagues--- blasphemed the God of Heaven because of their Pains and their Sores.* Into such profane Enormities of Language is Discontent apt to break forth, questioning the Power of God, or his Willingness to succour us; venting Wrath and Displeasure toward him; charging him foolishly with Injustice, or with Unkindness, or with Negligence, or with Impotency; the abstaining from which Behaviour, under the Sense of his bitter Calamities, is a great Commendation of Job; || *In all this ('tis said) Job sinned not, neither charged God foolishly.*

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* Isa. 3. 21. † Rev. 19. 9, 11, 21.

|| Job 1. 22. Οὐκ ἔδωκεν ἀρετῶν τῶ Θεῷ.

2. * We should indeed forbear any the least complaint, or murmuring, in regard to the Dispensations of Providence; or upon dissatisfaction in the State allotted us: St. Jude saith, that God in the last Day, † *will come to execute judgment, and to convince men of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him: these* (subjoineth he) are γογγύσαι μεμψιμοίροι, *murmurers, that complain of their lot; which signifieth the heinousness and extreme dangerousness of this practice. ‡ Wherefore doth the living man complain?* is the Prophet's question, implying it to be an unreasonable and blameable Practice. Wherefore the Advice of David is good; to suppress all Complaint, to be still and silent in such Cases: || *Be still* (saith he) *and know that I am God,* and, *Be silent to the Lord;* the which Precepts his Practice may seem well to interpret and back; † *I was,* saith he, *dumb, I opened not my mouth, because it was thy doing:* And accordingly Job, † *Behold* (said he, after having considered all the

Rea-

* Ἄλλ' ἔχε σιγῇ, μῦθον ἐπίτρεπον δὲ θεοῖσι.
Hom. Od. τ'.

† Jud. 15. 16. ‡ Lam. 3. 39.

|| Psal. 46. 10. 4. 4. 37. 7.

† Psal. 39. 9. — σιωπῇ Πάσχειν ἀλγέα πολλά
εἰας ὑποδέχμενος ἀνδρῶν. Hom. Od. ν' ‡ Job 40. 4.

Reasons he could imagine of God's Proceedings) *I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth.* And thus our Saviour, when || he was oppressed and afflicted, opened not his mouth.

3. Yea it is our Duty, in these Cases, to spend our Breath ‡ in declaring our Satisfaction in God's dealing with us; acknowledging his Wisdom, Justice and Goodness therein; blessing and praising him for all that hath befallen us; each of us confessing after *David*; * *I know, O Lord, that thy Judgments are right, and that thou in Faithfulness hast Afflicted me*; imitating *Job*, who upon the loss of all his Goods did say no more than this, † *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord.*

4. We should abstain from all irregular, unlawful and unworthy Courses toward the removal or remedy of our Needs or Crosses, chusing rather to abide quietly under their pressure, than by any unwarrantable Means to relieve, or relax our selves; rather bearing patiently, than violently, like those in the Prophet, †* break-

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|| *Isaiah 53. 7.* ‡ *Δόξα τῷ Θεῷ πάντων ἕνεκεν. ὃ γὰρ παύσομαι τὸ το ἐπιλέγων ἀεὶ ἐπὶ πάνσι μοι τοῖς συμβαίνουσι.* Chrys. *ad Olymp. Ep. 11.*

* *Psal. 119. 75.* † *Job 1. 21.*

†* *Jer. 5. 5.*

ing our Yoke, and bursting our Bands. ‡ Take heed, regard not Iniquity; for this hast thou chosen rather than Affliction. We should rather continue Poor, than by cozenage or rapine endeavour to raise our Fortune; we should rather lie under Disgrace and Contempt, than by sinful or sordid Compliances strive to acquire the Respect and Favour of Men; we should rather willingly rest in the lowest Condition, than do as those, who by disturbing the World, by fomenting Disorders and Factions, by supplanting their Neighbours Welfare, by venting Slanders and Detractions, do labour to amplify their Estate: We should rather endure any Inconvenience or Distress, than have recourse to Ways of evading them, disallow'd by God; doing as the *Jews* did, who in their Straits, against the declared Pleasure of God, * *set their Faces toward Ægypt, strengthened themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, trusted in the Staff of that broken Reed.* In neglect or diffidence toward God, to embrace such Aids, is, (as God in the *Prophet* declareth) a very blameable and mischievous Folly: † *Ephraim* (saith he) *is like a silly Dove without Heart; they call to Ægypt, they go to Affyria*

‡ Job 36. 21. * Jer. 42. 15. 2. 18, 13. Isa. 30. 2. 36. 6. 31. 1. Ezek. 17. 15. † Hos. 7. 11, 13.

Affyria—*Woe unto them, for they have fled from me; destruction unto them, because they have transgressed against me.* We may consider how St. Paul reproveth the *Corinthians* for seeking a Redress of wrong, scandalous and dishonourable to the Church:

** Now therefore it is utterly a Fault among you, that ye go to Law one with another; Why do ye not rather take wrong; why do ye not rather suffer your selves to be defrauded?*

Even to Right our selves in a way, whereby any Dishonour may come to God, or Damage to his Church, is not to be approved; and better it is, in the *Apostle's* Judgment, to bear any Injury or Damage our selves: † *Better it is (saith St. Peter) if the Will of God be so, that we suffer for Well-doing, than to do Ill.* And, *Let them who suffer according to the Will of God, commit the keeping of their Souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creatour;* is another wholesome Advice of that great *Apostle*.

5. We should, notwithstanding any Adversity, proceed in our Affairs (such as God requireth, or Reason putteth us upon) with Alacrity, Courage and Industry; performing however, so far as our Circumstances

* 1 Cor. 6. 7. † 1 Pet. 3. 17. 4. 19.

stances do permit, what is good and fit for us: No disappointment or cross, no straits or grievances of Condition should render us listless or lazy; but rather should quicken and inflame our Activity; this being a good way to divert us from the Sense of our Misfortunes, and to comfort us under their Pressure; as also the readiest way to remove or to abate them, τὸ παρὸν εὖ διαθεῖν, *to order the present well*, whatever it be; † to make the best of a bad Matter, to march forward whither Reason calls (how difficultly soever, or slowly it be) in a rough or dirty Way; * not to yield to Difficulties, but resolutely to encounter them, to struggle lustily with them, to endeavour with all our Might to surmount them; are Acts worthy of a manly Reason and Courage; to direct ill Accidents to good Ends, and improve them to honest Uses, is the Work of a noble Virtue. If a bad Game be dealt us, we should not presently throw up, but play it out so well as we can; so perhaps we may save somewhat, we shall at least be busie till a better come. || *Put thy*

† Κερδαντέον τὸ παρὸν σὺν εὐλογισίᾳ. Ant. 4. 26. 6. 2.

* Τὸ παρὸν ἀπευθύνειν πρὸς ὀσιότητα καὶ δικαιοσύνην. Id. 12. 1. Tu ne cede malis, sed contra audentior ito. || Psal. 37. 3.

thy trust in the Lord, and be doing good, is the *Psalmist's* Advice in such a case; and it is a Practice necessary to the procuring and maintaining Content; If we be not otherwise well employed, we shall be apt, in our Thoughts, to melancholize, and dote upon our Mischances, the Sense of them will fasten upon our Spirits, and gnaw our Hearts.

6. We should behave our selves fairly and kindly toward the Instruments and Abettors of our Adversity; toward those who brought us into it, and those who detain us under it, by keeping off Relief, and those who forbear to afford the Succour we might expect; forbearing to express any Wrath or Displeasure, to exercise any Revenge or Enmity toward them; but rather, even upon that score, bearing good Will, and expressing Kindness toward them; not only as to our Brethren, whom, according to the general Law of Charity, we are bound to love, but as to the Servants of God in this particular case, and the Instruments of his Pleasure toward us; considering, that by maligning or molesting them, we do express ill Resentments of God's dealing with us, and, in effect, through their Sides, do wound his Providence. Thus did the good King
behave

behave himself toward * *Shimei*, when he was bitterly reproached and cursed by him; not suffering (upon this account, because he was God's Instrument of afflicting himself) that any harm should be done unto him; thus the Holy *Apostles* † *being reviled did bless, being defamed did entreat*; thus our Lord demeaned himself toward his spiteful Adversaries; who, || *when he was reviled, did not revile again; when he suffered, did not threaten, but committed it to him that judgeth righteously*. In all these cases we should at least observe the Rules and Advices of the *Wise-man*; ‡ *Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me, I will render to the Man according to his Work; Say thou not, I will recompence Evil; but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee*.

Discontent usually consisteth not so much in displeasure for the Things we suffer, as at the Persons who bring them on us, or who do not help to rid us from them; it is their presumed Injury or Discourtesie which we do fret at; such Passions therefore toward Men being discarded, our Evils presently will become supportable, and Content easily will ensue. As Men in any sickness or pain, if their
Friends

* 2 Sam. 16. 7. † 1 Cor. 4. 12, || 1 Pet. 2. 23;
‡ 3. 9. † Prov. 24. 29. 20. 22.

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Friends are about them (affording Comfort or Assistance) do not seem to feel any thing, and forbear complaining; so if the World about us doth please us, if we bear no Disaffection or Grudge toward any Person in view, our Adversity will appear less grievous, it will indeed commonly be scarce sensible to us.

In these and such like Acts, the Duty and Virtue of Contentedness doth especially reside; or it is employed and exercised by them: And so much may suffice for the Explication of its Nature: I come now to consider the Way of attaining it, intimated by St. *Paul* here, when he saith, *I have learned.*

O F

CONTENTMENT.

The Second S E R M O N.

PHIL. IV. 11.

*I have learned in whatever state I am,
therewith to be content.*

THES E words signifie how Contentedness may be attained, or how it is produced: It is not an Endowment innate to us; it doth not arrive by chance into us; it is not to be purchased by any price; it springeth not up of itself, nor ariseth from the quality of any state; but it is a product of discipline; *I have learned.*

It is a question debated in *Plato*, εἰ δίδασκόντων ἡ ἀρετή, *whether virtue be to be learned*: *St. Paul* plainly resolveth it in this case by his own experience and testimony. What *Seneca* saith in general of vertue (* *Nature giveth*

* Non dat natura virtutem, ars est bonum fieri. Sen. Ep. 89.
Virtus etiam si quosdam impetus ex natura sumit, tamen perficienda doctrinâ est. Quintil. 12. 2.

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giveth not virtue; it is an art to become good) is most true of this Virtue; it is an Art, with which we are not born, no more than with any other Art or Science; the which, as other Arts, cannot be acquired without studious application of Mind, and industrious Exercise: No Art indeed requireth more hard Study and Pain toward the acquire of it, there being so many difficulties, so many obstacles in the way thereto: We have no great Capacity, no towardly Disposition to learn it; We must, in doing it, deny our carnal Sense, we must settle our wild Fancy, and suppress fond Conceits: we must bend our stiff and stubborn Inclinations; we must repress and restrain wanton Desires; we must allay and still tumultuous Passions; we must cross our Humour, and curb our Temper; which to do is a hard Chapter to learn: Much Consideration, much Practice, much Contention and Diligence are required thereto.

Hence it is an Art which we may observe few do much study; and of the Students therein, few are great Proficients; so that *Qui sit, Mecenas?* Horace's question, *How comes it to pass, that no body liveth content with the lot assigned by God?* wanted not sufficient ground.

However it is not like the *Quadrature of the Circle*, or the *Philosophers Stone*, an Art

Art impossible to be learned, and which will baffle all Study: there are Examples which shew it to be obtainable; there are Rules and Precepts, by observing which we may arrive to it.

And it is certainly a most excellent piece of learning; most deserving our earnest study: no other Science will yield so great satisfaction, or good use; all other Sciences, in comparison thereto, are dry and fruitless Curiosities; for were we Masters of all other Knowledge, yet wanted the skill of being content, we should not be wise or happy; Happiness and Discontent are ἀνίστα (things incompatible.)

But how then may this Skill be learned? I answer, chiefly (divine Grace concurring) by these three ways. 1. By understanding the Rules and Precepts, wherein the Practice thereof consisteth. 2. By diligent Exercise, or Application of those Rules to practice; whereby the Habit will be produced. 3. By seriously considering, and impressing upon our Minds those rational Inducements (suggested by the Nature and Reason of things) which are apt to persuade the Practice thereof. The *first* way I have already endeavoured to declare; the *second* wholly dependeth upon the Will and Endeavour of the Learner; the *third* I shall now insist upon, propounding
some

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some rational considerations, apt (by God's help) to persuade Contentedness, and serving to cure the malady of Discontent. They may be drawn from several heads; from God, from our selves, from our particular Condition or State; from the World, or general state of Men here; from the particular state of other Men in comparison to ours; from the nature and consequences of the Duty it self; Every thing about us well examined and pondered, will minister somewhat inducing and assisting thereto.

I. In regard to * God we may consider, that Equity doth exact, and Gratitude requireth, and all Reason dictateth, that we should be content; or that in being discontented we behave our selves very unbecomingly and unworthily, are very unjust, very ingrateful, and very foolish toward him.

1. Equity doth exact this Duty of us, and in performing it we act justly toward God, both admitting his due Right, and acknowledging his good Exercise thereof: That saying in the *Gospel*, † *Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?* is a most evident maxim of Equity; it is therefore the natural Right and Prerogative of God (as the Creator and Preserver, and consequently

* 1 Sam. 3. 18. † Matt. 20. 15.

sequently the absolute Lord, Owner and Governour of all things) to assign his station, and allot his portion to every Person, as he judgeth good and convenient; it is most just that inviolably he should enjoy this Right; He being also infinitely wise and good, it is likewise most just to acknowledge that he doth perfectly well manage this Right. Now by contentful Submission to God's disposal of things, we do worthily express our due regard to both these, avowing his Right, and approving his Exercise thereof; but by discontent and Regret at what happeneth, we do in effect injure God in both those respects, disavowing his Right, and impeaching his Management. We do thereby so renounce his Right, as (so far as Conceit and Wish do reach) to invade it, and usurp it to our selves; signifying, that in our Opinion things ought not to be ordered according to his Judgment and Pleasure, but after our Fancy and Humour; we claim to our selves the privilege of controlling his Estate, and dispensing his Goods, so as to be our own Carvers, and to assume to our selves so much as we think good; we imply, that, if we were able, we would extort the Power out of his hands, and manage it our selves, modelling the World according to our Conceits and Desires.

We

We do also (since we cannot but perceive the other attempt of dispossessing God to be frivolous and fruitless) in effect ‡ charge God with misdemeanour, with iniquity or infirmity in his distribution and disposal of things; intimating, that in our opinion he doth not order them so justly, or so wisely as might be (not so well as we in our Wisdom and Justice should order them;) for did we conceive them managed for the best, we could not but judge it most unreasonable to be aggrieved, or to complain: so heinously insolent and unjust are we in being discontent. In earnest, Which is most equal, that God should have his Will, or we? For shame we shall say God: Why then do we not contentedly let him have it?

'Tis indeed, if we consider it, the highest piece of Injustice that we can be guilty of; exceeding that which we commit in any other sort of Disobedience. For as in any State seditious Mutinying is the greatest Crime, as most directly violating the Majesty, and subverting the Authority of the Prince; so in the World, none may be supposed more to offend and wrong its Sovereign Governour, than such Malecontents,

‡ *Multos inveni equos adversus homines, adversus Deum
neminem: Sen. Ep. 93.*

tents, who dislike and blame his Proceedings: Even a *Heathen* could teach us, that it is our Duty * *to subject our mind to him that administreth all things, as good Citizens to the Law of the Commonwealth*; if we do not, we are rebellious and seditious, which is the highest pitch of Injustice toward our most Gracious Sovereign.

Again, there can be no greater Injury or Affront offered to God, than to † *give him the lie*, by questioning his Veracity or Fidelity; this Discontent plainly doth involve: for God hath expressly declared himself ready upon all occasions to do us good; he hath promised to ‡ *care for us*, and || *never to forsake us*, or leave us destitute; which word of his if we did not distrust, and take him to be unfaithful, we could not be discontent: As no Man is displeased with his Condition, or suspicious of Want, who knoweth that he hath abundant supply of all he can need in a sure place; that he hath a Person most able, most willing, most faithful, engaged to succour him; so did we believe God to be true, who hath promised to help us,
we

* Τὴν αὐτὴ γνώμην ὑποτάσσειν τῷ διοικῶντι τὰ ὅλα, καθάπερ οἱ ἀγαθοὶ πολῖται τῷ νόμῳ τῆς πόλεως. Arr. 1. 12. † 1 Joh. 5. 10. ‡ Matth. 6. 25, 36.
|| Heb. 13. 5.

Serm. II. Of Contentment. 47

we could not be discontented for fear of any want.

We must at least, in so doing, suspect God to be deficient in Goodness toward us, or unwilling to help us; or we must apprehend him impotent, and unable to perform what he would, and what he hath promised, for us; (like those Infidels, who said, * *Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Can he give bread also, can he provide flesh for his people?*) which conceits of God are also very unworthy, and injurious to him.

2. Gratitude requireth of us this Duty: for we having no right or title to any thing; all that we have coming from God's pure bounty; he having upon us all (whatever our Condition comparatively is, or may seem to us) † freely conferred many great benefits, common to all Men among us (our Being, Life, Reason, Capacity of eternal Happiness, manifold spiritual Blessings, incomparably precious and excellent) we in all reason should be thankful for these, without craving more, or complaining for the want of other things.

Whereas

* Psal. 78. 19. † *Iniquus est qui muneris sui arbitrium danti non relinquit, avidus qui non lucri loco habet quod accepit, sed damni quod reddidit, &c. Sen. ad Polyb. 29.*

Whereas also all Events (how cross soever to our sensual Conceits or Appetites) are by God designed and dispensed for our Good, Gratitude requireth that we should thank God for them, and not murmur against them.

Surely, if instead of rendring God Thanks for all the excellent Gifts, which he most liberally (without any previous Obligation to us, or Desert of ours) hath bestowed on us, and continueth to bestow, we fret and quarrel, that he doth not in smaller Matters seem to cocker us, we are extremely ingrateful and disingenuous toward him: If any great Person here should freely bestow on us Gifts of huge Value (high Preferment, or much Wealth) but with good Reason, as we might presume, should withhold from us some Trifle that we fancy or dote on, should we not be very Unworthy, if we should take it ill, and be angry with him for that Cause? The Case is plainly the same; God hath in the frankest manner bestowed on us innumerable and inestimable Goods, in comparison whereto any Comfort or Convenience of our State here is very trivial and despicable; Are we not therefore very ingrateful, if we heinously resent the want of any such Things; if upon any such accompt we disgust his Providence?

Do

Do we not deal, beyond all Expression, unworthily with God, in so much undervaluing the Goods which he hath given us, or doth offer us, and hath put in our reach? He hath made us capable of the greatest Goods imaginable, and faithfully upon easie Terms proffereth them to us; he even tendereth himself (himself, the Immense and All-comprehending Good, the Fountain of all Joy and Bliss) to be fully enjoyed by us; his Wisdom he offereth to instruct and guide us, his Power to protect and guard us, his Fulness to supply us, his Goodness to comfort us; he offereth his Love and Favour to us, in having which we virtually and in effect have all Things; becoming thereby, in the highest Degree, Rich and Honourable and Happy; And is it not then outrageous Unworthiness to prize any other Thing (any petty Accommodation of this transitory Life, any pitiful Toy here) so much, as to be displeased for the want thereof; as if all this were not enough to satisfy our Needs, or satiate our Desires; as if, notwithstanding all these immense Effusions (yea, as it were Profusions) of Bounty upon us, we could be Indigent or Unhappy? *Shall we* (to use that holy and most ingenuous Consideration of *Job*)

D

* re-

* receive so much Good from the bountiful Hand of God, and shall we not contentedly receive, or bear so small Evils from him? Evils indeed in Name, and to gross Sense, but not so in reality, not so in effect, † at least not so in God's Design; but rather Things very convenient and profitable for us; which is another aggravation of our Ingratitude; for,

Are we not also very ingrateful in misapprehending and disliking that, which God doeth out of very gracious Intentions towards us; in loathing his fatherly and friendly Dispensations; the fatherly Chastisements, and friendly Disciplines, which he unwillingly is forced (is, I say, forced by his own great Love, and by our pressing Needs) to inflict or impose upon us? Surely, our ill Opinion of, or || *despising* (as the *Wise-man* calleth it) these unpleasant Blessings, is no small Fault: Neither will our not discerning (out of affected Dulness, and stupid Pravity not discerning)

* Job 2. 10.

† Εὐχαισῶ σοι πάτερ, ὃ ποιεῖς ἡμῶν ἀνδρά-
των---ὅτι ἀνοήτως ἡμᾶς ἐν ποιεῖς, &c. said Philagri-
us in a grievous Disease. Naz. Ep. 66. Ἐπειδὴν τὸ
μὴ πόθεν ἐκ ἔχω, ἔτετο γὰρ τῷ πόθεν παρρη-
σίᾳ, τὸ εὐχαισεῖν. Naz. de sc. Ep. 63.

|| Prov. 3. 11.

cerning) the wisdom of God's Methods, and the wholsomness of the Means he useth to better us, excuse us from foul Ingratitude.

3. Again, ‡ upon many accounts, Reason farther dictateth in respect to God, that we should be content; because it is most reasonable to acquiesce in God's Choice of our State, he being infinitely more wise than we, and infinitely better understanding what is good for us than we can do; because he is well affected to us, * and more truly loveth us than we do ourselves; because he hath a just Right, and irresistible Power to dispose of us, the which (whatever we can do, however we resent it) he will effectually make use of, whence it is extreamly foolish to be discontent: Foolish it is to be dissatisfied with the results of his Wisdom, adhering to our vain Apprehensions; foolish to distrust his Goodness, in compliance with our fond Self-love; foolish to contest his unquestionable Right, and uncontrollable Power, having nothing but mere Impotency to oppose against them; no less than

D 2

down-

‡ Εἶχετο πρὸς τὰς θεὰς ἀπλῶς τὰ γὰρ δὲ διδόναι, ἅς τὰς θεὰς κάλλιστα εἰδύτας ὅποια ἀγαθὰ εἴσι.
Xenoph. de Socr.

* *Charior est illis homo quam sibi.*

downright Madneſs it is to † fret and fume at that which we can no-wiſe help, to bark at that which lodgeth in Heaven ſo far high above us, to ſolicit deaf Neceſſity with our ineffectual Wailings; for if we think that our Diſpleaſure will affect God, that our Complaints will incline him to alter our Condition, or comply with our Wiſhes, we do conceit vainly, and without any ground; ſooner may we, by our Imagination, ſtop the Tides of the Sea, or turn the Streams of Rivers backward; ſooner, ‡ by our Cries, may we ſtay the Sun, and change all the Courſes of the Stars, than by our paſſionate Reſentments or moanful Clamours we can check the Current of Affairs, or alter that State of Things, which is by God's high Decree eſtabliſhed: Diſcontented Behaviour will rather faſten our Condition, or remove it into a worſe Place; * as it highly doth offend God, and encreaſeth our Guilt, ſo it moveth God to continue, and to augment our Evils. Thus liſting up our Eyes to Heaven, and conſidering the reference our Diſpoſition and Demeanour hath

† Ἐνάτε κλαίης, ἄντε μὴ, πορεύεται. Philem.

‡ Οὐ γὰρ τις ἀρήξις πέλεται κρυεῖο γόοιο. Hom. Il. ε.

* Σὺ δ' εἰκ' ἀνάγκη, καὶ θεοῖσι μὴ μάχεσθαι. Eurip.

hath to God, will induce us to bear our Case contentedly.

II. Again, † Reflecting upon our selves, we may observe much Reason to be content with our State; in whatever Capacity we look upon our selves, it in Reason becometh us, we in Duty are obliged to be so.

I. As Men and Creatures we naturally are indigent and impotent; we have no just claim to any Thing, nor any Possession maintainable by our Power; all that we have, or can have, cometh from most pure Courtesie and Bounty; wherefore, how little soever is allowed us, we have no Wrong done us, nor can we justly complain thereat: Such Beggars as we are, must not pretend to be Chusers; if any thing be given us, we may be glad, we should be thankful. It is for those who have a Right and a Power to maintain it, to resent and expostulate, if their Due be with-held; but for us that never had any Thing, which we could call our own; that have no Power to get or keep any Thing; for us that came into the World naked and defenseless, that live here in continual, absolute and abitrary dependance

D 3

dancee

† Lam. 3. 39.

dance for all our Livelihood and Subsistence, to contest with him that maintaineth us, or to complain of his Dealing, is ridiculously absurd and vain.

2. Upon a moral Account, we have less reason to challenge ought, or to complain of any thing; for we deserve nothing but Evil: If we rightly esteem and value our selves, any thing will seem good enough for us, any Condition will appear better than we deserve: Duly examining the Imperfections and Infirmities of our Nature, the Disorder and Depravedness of our Hearts, the Demeanours and Enormities of our Lives, we cannot but apprehend, that we are even unworthy of the *crumbs which fall from our Master's Table*; we cannot but acknowledge with the good Patriarch, that we are *† less than the least of God's Mercies*. Considering our natural Unworthiness, we shall see that we deserve not so much as those common Benefits which all Men enjoy, and without which we cannot subsist; so that, in regard to them, we shall be ready to acknowledge with the Psalmist; * *Lord what is Man that thou takest knowledge of him, or the Son of Man, that thou makest account of him?*

Trying

|| Matt. 15. 17. † Gen. 32. 10. * Psal. 44. 3.
Job 7. 27.

Serm. II. Of Contentment.

55

Trying our Hearts, and examining our Ways, we shall soon discover it to be abundant Mercy, that we are not utterly deprived of all good Things, stript of all Comforts, yea, dispossessed of our very Being and Life it self; that we are obliged to acknowledge with those in the *Lamentations*, † *It is of the Lord's Mercies that we are not consumed, because his Compassions fail not.* Were we far better than we are, yet it would not become us to contest with him, to whose disposal and Judgment we are subject; as *Job* teacheth us: † *Behold (saith he) God taketh away, who can hinder him, who will say unto him, what doest thou? If he will not withdraw his Anger, the proud * Helpers do stoop under him; how much less shall I answer him, and chuse out my Words to reason with him; whom though I were righteous, I would not answer, but I would make supplication to my Judge; || but for us, Men so unrighteous and guilty, to debate with, to question the proceedings of our Judge, it is much more unseemly.*

Nothing can be more absurd, than for Men so deeply indebted, than for Sinners so very obnoxious to Wrath, to be ag-

D. 4

gri-

† Lam. 3. 22. † Job 9. 12, &c. * Κῆρτι.
|| (Job 9. 32.)

grieved in any State: Shall we, who are conscious to our selves of so many great Sins against our God; who by wilful Transgressions, or slothful Neglects, have so much affronted and offended him; who have so little requited his Love, and so much abused his Patience; who have born so little Fruit, and rendred him so little Service, shall we be angry that our Humour is not pleased in all Things? Shall we affect to swim in Plenty, to wallow in Pleasure, to bask our selves in Ease; to be fed with Dainties, to be gaily Cloathed, to flourish in a brave and splendid Condition, to be worshipped and honoured, who deserve not the meanest Competence, or lowest Respect, to whom it is a great Favour that we are permitted to subsist, whom strict Justice would often have cast into utter Misery and Disconsolateness? It is not surely for such Persons to be dissatisfied with any thing in this World, but to bless God's exceeding Mercy, that they abide there on this side of the bottomless Pit; 'tis their part, with most submissive Patience, to bear whatever is inflicted on them, humbly saying with him in the Prophet, * *I will bear the Indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against*

* Mic. 7. 9.

Serm. II. Of Contentment. 57

against him. Seeing, whatever our Crosses or Sufferings be, we cannot but confess to God with those in *Ezra*, * *Thou hast punished us less than our Iniquities deserve*; being gainers upon the Matter, having so much of our Debt remitted in effect, being in Comparison to what was due to us very tolerably, yea, very favourably dealt with, Why should we be dissatisfied? If in such Cases Men should deal so favourably with us, we should be much pleased, and ready to thank them; why then should we take it ill of God, when he, even in his hardest Proceedings against us, expresseth so much Indulgence and Mercy?

If we must be displeased, and lust to complain, we have reason much rather to accuse our selves, than to exclaim at Providence, to bewail our Sins, than to deplore our Fortune: For our Evils are not indeed so much the voluntary Works of God, who † *doth not afflict willingly, or grieve the Children of Men*, as the natural products of our Sins, which we do wilfully commit: It is (as the Prophet speaketh) || *our Sins that withhold good Things from us*; and bring evil Things upon us: ‡ *Fools, because of their Transgression, and* be-

D. 51

* Ezr. 9. 13. † Lam. 3. 33. Αὐθαίρετα πῆμα | α.
|| Jer. 5. 25. ‡ Psal. 107. 17,

because of their Iniquities, are afflicted. We make Adversity necessary or expedient for us, * then we cry out upon it: We labour in Planting, but cannot brook *the Fruit of our doings*; we, like Prodigals, fling away our Estate in wanton Profusions, then complain of Want; we affect and chuse the Causes, but loath and cannot abide the certain Consequences; so fond in our Conceits, so perverse are we in our Affections: † *Wherefore doth the living Man complain, for the punishment of his Sins?* so well might the Prophet demand and expostulate.

3. We may farther, looking on our selves, consider our selves as Servants to God, or rather as Slaves, absolutely subject to his disposal; and shall any Servant, shall a mere Slave presume to chuse his Place, or determine his Rank in the Family? Shall he appoint to himself what Office he will discharge, what Garb he shall go in, what Diet he must have; what he will do, and how he shall be accommodated? Is it not fit that all these Things should be left to our Master's Discretion and Pleasure? it is most Reasonable that we should thoroughly acquiesce in his Determination: Even a *Pagan* Philosopher could

* Jer. 17. 10. 21. 14. 32. 19. 6. 19. † Lam. 3. 39.

could teach us, that this is reasonable; who thus piously directeth his Speech to God: * *For the rest, use me to what thou pleasest. I do consent unto thee, and am indifferent. I refuse nothing which seemeth good to thee; lead me whither thou wilt; put on me what Garment thou pleasest: Wilt thou have me to be a Governour, or a private Man, to stay at home, or to be banished away, to be poor, or to be rich? I will, in respect to all these Things, apologize for thee with Men; thus did Epictetus say, and such Speech well becometh our Relation to God: Servants should be content with their Masters Appointments and Allowances; they should not only themselves forbear to find Fault with, but be ready to maintain his Proceedings against any, who shall presume to reprehend or blame them. Especially such Servants as we are, who, † *after we have done all Things commanded us, must acknowledge that we are unprofitable Servants; such as can bring no considerable Benefit to our Lord, or any-wise advance his**

* Χρῶ μοι λοιπὸν εἰς ὃ ἂν θέλῃς. ὁμογνωμονῶ σοι, ἵσως εἰμί. ἔδ' ἐν παρρησίᾳ τῇ σοι δοκούντων. ὅτε θέλῃς ἄγε, ὡς θέλῃς ἐσθῆτα περὶ εἶδες. ἄρχην μὲ θέλῃς, ἰδιωτεύειν, μένειν, φεύγειν, πένεσθαι, πλεῖν; ἐγὼ σοι ὑπὸ ἀπάσης τέττων φρεσὶ τὰς ἀνθρώπων ἀπολογίσομαι. *Arg. 2. 16.*

† *Luc. 17. 10.*

his State ; such as therefore cannot challenge any Wages from him, more than he out of mere Favour is pleased to allow : Could we, by our Labours, enrich God, or raise him in Dignity, or procure Delight to him, it might seem congruous that he should answerably Reward us ; but as he getteth nothing by us, so we cannot require any Thing from him : Our best Services do indeed rather need Pardon, than deserve any Reward ; No Man hath lived so well, that he can pretend any thing from God, that he is not indeed much behind-hand in his Accounts with God, having received from God far more of Benefit than he can return to him in Service : No Man, without extreme Presumption and Arrogance, can offer to prescribe, in what measure, or what manner God should Reward him.

4. Again, if we consider our selves as the Children of God, either by Birth or Nature, or by Adoption and Grace, How can we be discontent for any thing ? Have we not thence great Reason to hope, or rather to be confident, that we shall never want any good thing (necessary or convenient for us) that no great Evil shall ever oppress us ? For is not God hence by Paternal Disposition inclined, is he not, in a manner, by Paternal Duty, engaged, in
all

all needful Occasions, to supply and succour us? Can we (without great Profaneness, and no less Folly) surmise, that he which is so immensely Good, will be a bad (an unkind, or a neglectful) Father to us? No, as there is no other Father in Goodness comparable to him, so none, in real Effects of Benignity, can come near him, so our Lord assureth us: * *If ye (saith he) being evil, know how to give good things to your Children; How much more will your heavenly Father give good things to his children that ask him?*

5. If we consider our selves as Christians, we have still more Reason to practise this Duty: As such, we are not only possessed of Goods abundantly, sufficient to satisfy our Desires; we have Hopes able to raise our Minds above the sense of all present Things; we have Entertainments that ever may divert our Minds, and fill our Hearts with Comfort; but we have also an Assurance of competent Supplies of Temporal Goods; for † *Godliness is profitable to all things, having the promise both of the present life, and of that which is to come:* and, ‡ *If we seek first the kingdom of heaven, and its righteousness, all these things shall be added*

* Mat. 7. 11. † 1 Tim. 4. 8. ‡ Mat. 6. 33.

added unto us. It is indeed strangely unhandſome for a Chriſtian ever to droop, or to be diſconſolate; for a Friend of God, and an Heir of Heaven, to think he wants any Thing, or fear that he ſhall ever want; for him, whoſe Treafure and Heart are above, to be ſo concerned with any thing here, as deeply to reſent it.

6. Again, if we reflect upon our ſelves as Rational Men, How for ſhame can we be diſcontent? Do we not therein much diſparage that excellent Perfection of our Nature? Is it not the proper Work of Reaſon to prevent things hurtful or offenſive to us, when that may be done; to remove them, if they are removeable; if neither of theſe can be compaſſed, to allay and mitigate them; ſo that we may be able well to ſupport them? Is it not its principal Uſe to drive away thoſe fond Conceits, and to quell thoſe troubleſome Paſſions, which create, or foment Diſquiet, and Diſpleaſure to us? If it cannot do this, What doth it ſignifie? To what purpoſe have we it? Is not our Condition really worſe than that of brute Beaſts, if Reaſon ſerveth only to deſcry the Cauſes of Trouble, but cannot enable to bear it? All the Reaſons we have produced, and all that we ſhall produce againſt Diſcontent, will, if we are Reaſonable Men, and
Reason

Serm. II. *Of Contentment.* 63

Reason availeth any thing, have this Effect upon us.

Wherefore considering our selves, our Capacities, our Relations, our Actions, it is most reasonable to be content with our Condition, and with whatever doth befall us.

OF

O F

CONTENTMENT.

The Third SERMON.

PHIL. IV. II.

*I have learned in whatever state I am,
therewith to be content.*

III. **F**Arther, if we consider our Condition (be it what it will, how poor, how mean, how despicable and forlorn soever) we can have from it no reasonable Ground of discontent.

I. Our Condition in this World cannot (if rightly estimated, and well managed) be extremely bad or sorrowful; nothing here can occur insupportable or very grievous in it self; we cannot, if we please, want any thing considerable, and
the

Serm. III. *Of Contentment.* 69

the Defect whereof may not be supplied, or supported by far better Enjoyments. If we have high Opinions of some things, as very excellent, or very needful for us, it's no Wonder, if we do want them, that our Condition is unpleasant to us; if we take other Things for huge Evils, then, if they be incumbent on us, we can hardly scape being displeased; but if we thoroughly look through such Things, and scan them exactly, valuing them, not according to fallacious Impressions of Sense, or illusive Dreamings of Fancy, but according to sound Dictates of Reason, we may find, that neither the absence of the former, nor the presence of the latter doth make our Condition much worse, or render our Case deplorable.

We are, for Instance, poor: that Condition rightly weighed, is not so very sad: * for what is Poverty! What but the Absence of a few superfluous things, which please wanton Fancy rather than answer Need; without which Nature is easily satisfied, and which if we do not affect, we cannot want? † What is it but to wear coarse Cloaths, to feed on plain and simple

* Tert. de Pat. 7.

† Τα δ' ἀργυρώματα ὅσιν ἢ τε πορεύεσθαι
Εἰς τὰς τελευτὰς χρήσιμα ἐκ εἰς τὸ βίον. Socrat.

66 *Of Contentment.* Serm. III.

ple Fare, to work and take some Pains, to sit or go in a lower Place, to have no Heaps of Cash, or Hoards of Grain, to keep no Retinue, ‡ to have few Friends, and not one Flatterer? and what great harm in this? It is a state, which hath its no small Conveniences and Comforts, its happy Fruits and Consequences; * which freeth us from many Cares and Distractions, from many Troubles and Crosses, from many Encumbrances, many Dangers, many Temptations, many sore Distempers of Body and Soul, many grievous Mischiefs, to which Wealth is exposed; which maintaineth Health, Industry and Sobriety; disposeth us to feed heartily, to move nimbly, to sleep sweetly; which preserveth us from Luxury, from Satiety, from Sloth and Unwieldiness. † It yieldeth Disposition of Mind, freedom and leisure to attend the study of Truth, the acquist of Virtue. ‡ It is a State which many have born with great Cheafulness; many (very wise Men) have voluntarily embraced; which is allotted

‡ *Vid. Plut. in Arist.*

* *Si vis vacare animo, aut pauper sis oportet. aut pauperi similis.*

† *Multis ad philosophandum obstitere divitia; paupertas expedita est, secura est. Sen. Ep. 17.*

‡ *Sapius pauper, & fidelius ridet. Sen. Ep. 30.*

Serm. III. *Of Contentment.* 67

lotted by divine Wisdom to most Men; and which the best Men often do endure; to which † God hath declared an especial regard, which the Mouth of Truth hath proclaimed happy: which the Son of God hath dignified by his Choice, and sanctified by his partaking deeply thereof: and can such a Condition be very loathsome; can it reasonably displease us?

Again, thou art, suppose, fallen into disgrace, or from Honour and Credit art depressed into a State of Contempt and Infamy? this also rightly prized is no such Wretchedness; for what doth this import; What, but a Change of Opinion in giddy Men, which thou dost not feel, which thou art not concerned in, if thou pleasest; which thou never hadst Reason much to regard, or at all to rely upon? What is thy Loss therein? it is the breaking of a Bubble, the sinking of a Wave, the changing of a Wind, the cracking of a thing most brittle, the slipping away of a thing most fugacious and slippery: what is Honour and Fame, but Thought, and what more flitting, what sooner gone away than a Thought? and why art thou displeased at the loss of a thing so very slender, and
slimme?

† Psal. 10. 14. 35. 10. 68. 10. 69. 33. 72. 4. 13. 140.
12. 146. 7. 147. 2. Luk. 6. 20. Jam. 2. 5. Isa. 66. 2.

68 *Of Contentment.* Sermon. III.

slimme? if thou didst know its Nature,
 thou canst not be disappointed; if thou
 didst not, it was worth thy while to be
 thus informed by Experience, that thou
 may'st not any more regard it. Is the Con-
 tempt thou hast incurred, from thy fault?
 bear the Consequence thereof patiently,
 and do thy best by removing the Cause, to
 reverse the Effect: Is it undeserved and
 causeless? be satisfied in thy Innocence,
 and be glad that thou art above the Folly
 and Injustice of those, who contemn thee.
 Let thy Affections rather be employed in
 pity of theirs, than in Displeasure for thy
 own Case. Did (let me ask thee again)
 the good Opinion of Men please thee?
 that Pleasure was fond and vain, and it is
 well thou art rid of it; did it not much
 affect thee? Why then dost thou much
 grieve at the Loss thereof? Is not also thy
 Fortune in this kind the same with that of
 the best Men? Have not those who have
 deserved most Honour, been exposed to
 most Contempt? † *But now (Job could say)*
they that are younger than I, have me in deri-
sion, — they abhor me, they flee far from me,
*and spare not to spit in my face. And, * I*
am, (could that great and good King say)

† Job. 30. 1, 10. * Psal. 22. 6, 7.

Serm. III. Of Contentment. 69

a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people; all they that see me, laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head. — and, we are ‡ defamed, we are reviled, we are made as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things unto this day, could the holy Apostles say; and † He is despised and rejected of men — he was despised and we esteemed him not, was said of our Lord himself; and can this Condition then in just esteem be so very pitiful, or grievous?

But thou art perhaps troubled because thou art wrongfully censured, odiously traduced and defamed, abused by Slander, or by Detraction; * which asperseth thee with things whereof thou art no wise guilty, or representeth thee in a Character unworthy of thee: Be it so; what then? why doth this so much affect thee?

Is not every Man subject to these things? are not the greatest Men, are not the wisest Men, are not the best Men liable to the same? yea chiefly liable, Excellency being the special Mark of Envy and Obloquy? can

‡ 1 Cor. 4. 12, 13. † Isa. 53. 3.

* Exempl. Jeremiæ. Chrys. ad Olymp. 16.

Gratias ago Deo meo, quod dignus sum quem mundus oderit. Hier. Ep. 39. (ad Asellam.)

|| can any good Men escape free of them among so many bad Men, whose Doings as Goodness doth reproach, so it provoketh their Malignity? Canst thou imagine to pass thy Days in so unjust and spiteful a World without incurring such bad Usage? can so many vain, so many bold, so many lawless, Tongues be tied up, or kept within compass of Truth, or Equity? Wilt thou suffer it to be in the Power of any Man at his Pleasure so easily to discompose and vex thee? because he will be bad, shalt thou be miserable? Why dost thou not rather please thy self in the Conscience of thy endeavouring to deserve and do well; in thy Innocence, and Clearness from the Blame which they impose on thee; in thy having given no cause of such Offence and Outrage? Why dost thou not rather pity their Unworthiness, and Unhappiness, who stoop to so mean and base Practices, than fret at them, as bad to thee? they do themselves far more mischief, than they can do thee.

And why dost thou not consider, that indeed thou art guilty of many Faults, and full of real Imperfections, so that no Man can easily derogate from thee more than thou deservest: he may indeed tax thee unjustly,

|| Ἄλλ' οἱ μὲν ἡδίσκη, ἐγὼ δὲ οὐκ ἡδίσκημαι. Theod.
Ep 80.

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ly, he may miss in the Particulars of his Charge, he may discover groundless Contempt, and Ill-will toward thee; but thou knowest thy self to be a grievous Sinner, and it is just that thou shouldst be reproached (God, for thy Humiliation, or thy Correction, may have ordered him, as *David* said he might have ordered *Shimei*, to curse thee) thou hast therefore more need to be humble in Reflection on thy self, than to swell with Disdain in regard to his Injury.

Thou shouldst improve this dealing, and make it wholesome to thee, by taking Occasion thence to correct thy real Faults, and endeavouring to become truly more worthy; that so thy Conscience may be a firm Bulwark against all Detraction and Obloquy: In fine, satisfy thy self by committing thy Soul with Patience in well-doing unto thy Judge, who assuredly will do thee right, will protect thy Reputation, and clear thy Innocence: † his Judgement is only worth regarding, be little concerned with any other.

Again, Being disappointed and crossed in the Success of their Projects, or Undertakings, is wont to put Men, as they conceive, into a wofull Case: But why so?
Why

Why (let me ask thee, who art discontented upon this Score) didst thou build much Expectation upon Uncertainties? Didst thou not foresee a possibility, that thy Design might miscarry? and if so, why art thou not prepared to receive what happeneth? Was it not an Adventure, why then art thou troubled with thy Chance? Is he not a silly Gamester, that will fret and fume at a bad Cast, or at the Loss of a Game? Didst thou refer the Business to God's Disposal and Abitrement? if not, thou deservedst to be crossed, and rather confess thy Fault, than complain of thy Fortune; if thou didst so, then be consistent with thy self, and acquiesce in his Determination. In fine, what is thy Loss? 'tis of thy Care and Pain; would it have been much better, that thou hadst been careless or idle? But hast thou not in lieu of them got some Wisdom and Experience? hast thou not (if thy Attempt was reasonable and worthy) exercised thy Wit, thy Courage, thy Industry? Hast thou not (by thy Defeat) got an Opportunity to express Equanimity and Patience? If thou so improvest thy Disappointment, thou art a Gainer by thy Loss, thou *doest more than conquer* by thy Defeat: However since the Gain, the Credit, the Preferment thou didst aim at, and hast missed, are things

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in themselves of no great Value, and such as thou may'st well live without, as other good Men have done, thou canst not have much Reason to be displeased upon this Account, or to reckon thy Condition very disastrous.

But Friends, will some Man say, have been unkind, have been ungrateful, have been fickle and false, have neglected, have deserted, have betrayed me. * *It was not an Enemy, that reproached me, then I could have born it, &c.* this is indeed commonly most grievous; yet being scanned, will not render a Man's Condition so lamentable: For, † such misbehaviour of Friends is more their Calamity than ours: The Loss of bad Friends is no Damage, but an Advantage; 'tis but the Loss of a Mischiefe, and a Trouble: The fewer we come to have of such, the more time we save, the less Trouble we meet with, the greater Security we enjoy. The Kindness we have shewed, the Obligations we have put on such, are not quite lost, they will bring the Reward due to Humanity and Fidelity; it will yield Satisfaction to us, that however we have been kind and faithful to them. The Fidelity of remaining true Friends may satisfy us; however if all o-

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* Psal. 55. 7.

† *Jam sibi poenas dedit qui peccavit.* Sen. de Gr. 2. 30

ther Friendships should fail, there is one remains, worth Millions of other Friends, who can never prove unfaithful or inconstant, who never will be unmindful of us, or deficient in kindness toward us.

The Death of || Friends doth, it may be, oppress thee with Sorrow.

But canst thou lose thy best Friend? canst thou lose the Presence, the Conversation, the Protection, the Advice, the Succour of God? Is he not immortal, is he not immutable, is he not inseparable from thee? Canst thou be destitute of Friends, whilst he stands by thee? Is it not an Affront, an heinous Indignity to him, to behave thy self, as if thy Happiness, thy Welfare, thy Comfort, had Dependence on any other but him? Is it not a great Fault to be † unwilling to part with any thing, when he calleth for it?

Neither is it a Loss of thy Friend, but a *
Sepa-

|| *Vid. Sen. Ep. 63.*

† *Vid. Greg. Naz. Ep. 202.*

* Οὐ γὰρ ἀπέθανεν ὁ πάντα ἀεισθεύων ἀνὴρ, καὶ τὸ Κτελεῖ φωνῶν, ἀλλὰ καθεύδει ὕπνον τοῦ σωήδου μακρότερον. *Theod. Ep. 68.*

Ἀποδημίαν τοίνυν παρεκαλῶ μακρὸν ἢ τελευτῶν, &c. *Theod. Ep. 14.*

Cur doles si periisse non credis? cur impatienter feras subductum interim quem credis reversurum? profectio est quam putas mortem. Tert. de Pat. 9. Sen. Ep. 63.

Impatentia in ejusmodi & spei nostra male ominatur, & fidem pravaricatur, &c. Tert. Ibid.

Separation for a small time ; he is only parted from thee, as taking a little Journey, or going for a small time to repose ; within a while we shall be sure to meet again, and joyfully to congratulate, if we are fit, in a better place, and more happy State ; *præmisimus, non amissimus* ; we have sent him thither before, not quite lost him from us.

Thy Friend, if he be a good Man (and in such Friendships only we can have true Satisfaction) is himself in no bad Condition, and doth not want thee ; † thou canst not therefore reasonably grieve for him ; and to grieve only for thy self, is perverse Selfishness and Fondness.

But thou hast lost a great Comfort of thy Life, and Advantage to thy Affairs here ? Is it truly so ? Is it indeed an irreparable Loss, even secluding the Consideration of God, whose Friendship repair-eth all possible Loss ? What is it, I pray, that was pleasant, convenient, or useful to thee in thy Friend, which may not in good measure be supplied here ? Was it a sense of hearty Good-will, was it a sweet Free-

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† Πῶς τὸ τὴν ἀγάπης ἀγαθὸν, ἐαυτῷ τὰ ῥᾶω διδόν-
τα, τῷ πλησίον ὑπενέμειν τὰ πρὸς ἀντιθέσεις ; Naz.
Or. 19.

dom of Conversation, was it sound Advice or kind Assistance in thy Affairs? And mayst thou not find those left, which are alike able, and willing to minister those Benefits? May not the same Means, which knit him to thee, conciliate others also to be thy Friends? † He did not alone surely possess all the Good-Nature, all the Fidelity, all the Wisdom in the World, nor hath carried them all away with him? Other Friends therefore thou mayst find to supply his room; all good Men will be ready, if thou art good, to be thy Friends; they will heartily love thee, they will be ready to cheer thee with their sweet and wholesome Society, to yield thee their best Counsel and Help upon any Occasion. Is it not therefore a fond and unaccountable Affection to a kind of Personality, rather than want of a real Convenience that disturbeth thee?

In fine, the same Reasons which in any other Loss may comfort us, should do it also in this; neither a Friend, nor any other good Thing we can enjoy under any security of not soon losing it; our Welfare is not annexed to one Man, no more than to any other inferior thing; this is
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† *Vid. Sen. Ep. 63.*

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the Condition of all good Things here, to be Transient and Separable from us; and accordingly we should be affected toward them.

Fragile fractum est, mortale mortuum est.

But farther, it perhaps displeaseth us, that the Course of the World doth not go right, or according to our Mind; that Justice is not well dispensed, that Virtue is under Hatches, that Worth is not considered, that Industry is not rewarded, that Innocence and Modesty are trampled upon; that Favour, Partiality, Corruption, Flattery, Craft, Impudence do carry all before them; devouring all the Encouragements due to honest Industry: This may be observed, but why should it displease? Art thou guilty of contributing to this? then mend; if not, then bear; especially seeing thou canst not help it; for so it hath always been, and ever will be in the World, that Things never have gone there as the wisest Judges, or the best Men desire: There have never been good Men enough to sway the World, nor will the few good Men that are, be so active in promoting publick Good, as Bad are in driving on their private Designs. Doth not this Course of Things necessarily spring from the Nature of Men, which there-

fore we should no more be vexed at, than for that a Serpent hath Poison, or that a Wasp hath a Sting? We cannot wonder at it, why then should we be strangely affected by it? Could any Man ever have been pleased, if this were a sufficient Cause of Displeasure? However the World goes, we may yet make a tolerable shift, God is engaged competently to provide for us; that should satisfie us. God observeth these things no less than we, and he can easily hinder them, yet he thinketh good to suffer them; and shall not we do so likewise? There is in fine appointed a Judgment hereafter, when all these things shall be redressed and set streight; when Justice and Virtue shall Triumph, when Integrity and Industry shall find their due Recompence; 'tis but a Moment to that time, and till then we may rest satisfied.

Thus if we do survey and rightly state things, which cause Discontent, and seem to render our Condition hard and sad, we shall find, that not from the things, but from our selves all the Mischief proceeds: We by our Imagination give to the lightest things a weight, and swell the smallest things into a vast Bulk; we fancy them very frightful and doleful, then we tremble and grieve at them. Mere Names, (the Names of Poverty, of Disgrace, of Defeat)

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do scare us, without consulting Reason, and considering how little terrible the Things are themselves. We follow silly Prejudices, judging that highly good, which the Vulgar admireth; that very Evil, which the weakest sort of Men are wont to complain of; hence so commonly doth our Case seem grievous. But in Truth there is no Condition so bad, but if we manage it well and wisely, if we bend our Mind to comply with it, if we moderate our Passions about the Accidents thereof, if we vigilantly embrace and enjoy the Advantages thereof, may not be easily supportable, yea prove very comfortable to us; it is our fond Conceits, our froward Humours, our perverse Behaviours, which do create the Trouble which seemeth adherent to any Condition, and embittereth every State; which from any slight Occasion doth create Vexation, and turneth every Event into Disaster.

2. As there is no * Condition here perfectly and purely good (not deficient in some Conveniences, not blended with some Troubles) so there is none so thoroughly bad, that it hath not somewhat convenient and comfortable therein; seldom or never all good things do forsake

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* — *usque adeò nulla est sincera voluptas.*
Sollicitique aliquid latis intervenit. — Ovid.

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a Man at once, or all Mischiefs together assail him; ‡ somewhat usually abideth, which well improved, or wisely enjoyed, may satisfie a Man, yea render his Estate comparable to theirs, who to vulgar Eyes appear to be in the best Condition: There is in every Condition somewhat of Good compensating for its Evils, and reducing it to a Balance with other more plausible States. We are, suppose again, in Poverty (that Instance I propound usually, as the most ordinary Ground of Discontent) but have we therewith good Health? then most rich Men may envy us, and reasonably we should not exchange our State with many crazy Princes: Have we therewith our Liberty? that is an inestimable good, which oftentimes the greatest Men have wanted, and would have purchased with Heaps of Gold: Have we therein a quiet Mind, and a free use of our Time? It is that, which wisest Men have prized above any Wealth, and which the chief Men of the World would be glad to taste of: Have we a clear Reputation? we have then the best Good that any Wealth can yield, we have more than many can obtain in the most splendid Fortune:

‡ *Assuescendum conditioni sua; & quàm minimum de illâ querendum, & quicquid habet circa se commodi apprehendendum est: nihil tam acerbum est, ex quo non aequus animus solatium inveniat.* Sen. de Tranq. an. cap. 10.

tune: Have we any Friends sticking to us? that is more than the richest Persons can assure themselves of, to whom it is near impossible to distinguish the Friends of their Person from the Flatterers of their Fortune; it is a Privilege and Solace which Princes are hardly capable to arrive at: Have we a bare Competency, sufficient to maintain our Life? We thereby keep our * Appetites in better Compass, and our Faculties in greater Vigour; we thence better relish all things; we in Consequence thereof avoid the Burthens, the Diseases, the Vices of Sloth and Luxury: Have we farther (as, if we are not very bad, we shall in this case assuredly have, Humanity disposing all Men thereto) the Compassion of Men? is not this somewhat better, than that Envy, that Ill-will, that Obloquy, which usually do attend Wealth and Prosperity? Why then, if our poor State hath so manifold Conveniences, do we so much distaste it? Why do we so dwell and pore on the small Inconveniences we feel under it, overlooking or slighting the Benefits we may enjoy thereby? This indeed ordinarily is our Folly and Infirmary, that the want of any little thing, which we fancy or affect,

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doth

* Prov. 27 7.

doth hinder us from Satisfaction in all other things ; * *One dead Flie* causeth all our *Ointment to stink* ; the possession of a Kingdom will not keep us from being † *heavy and displeased* (as *Ahab* was) if we cannot acquire a small Vineyard near us ; on that one thing our Head runs continually, our Heart is wholly set, we can think on, we can taste nothing else ; the want of that, notwithstanding all our Affluence, doth pinch us, our Dainties thence do prove insipid, our Splendours appear dim, every thing but that is a Toy unto us : So capriciously and unaccountably prone are we to Discontent.

3. Is our Condition (let me ask again) so extremely bad, that it cannot be much worse ? Are we sunk to the Bottom of all Calamity ? No surely, God's Providence will not suffer, the State of Things here can never admit that to be : Here are Succours always ready against Extremities ; our own Wit and Industry, the help of Relations or Friends, the natural Pity and Charity of our Neighbours, will preserve us from them ; especially Persons in any measure Innocent can never come near them ; there will therefore never fail some good Matter of Content in what remains ;

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* Eccles. 10. 1. † 1 Kings 21. 4.

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a few good Things, well improved, may greatly solace us. But however, let us imagine our Case to be the worst that can be; that a confluence of all Temporal Mischiefs and Wants hath arrived, that we are utterly bereaved of all the Comforts this World afforded; that we are stripped of all our Wealth, quite sunk in our Reputation, deserted of every Friend, deprived of our Health and our Liberty; that all the Losses, all the Disgraces, all the Pains which poor † *Job* sustained, or far more and greater than those, have together seized on us; yet we cannot have sufficient reason to be discontent; for that nevertheless we have Goods left to us in our Hands, or within our reach, far surpassing all those Goods we have lost, much outweighing the Evils we do undergo: When the World hath done its worst, we remain Masters of Things incomparably better than it, and all it containeth; the Possession whereof may, and (if we be wise) will abundantly satisfy us. We are Men still, and have our Reason left behind, which alone, in worth, exceedeth all the Treasures of the World; in well using which, and thereby ordering all Things

† *Job*, who ἐκέλευσεν αὐτῷ (τῷ διαβόλῃ) βελούδιον ἅπασαν καλὰτοξενόμενον δι' αὐτῶν, &c. *Chrys.* ad. *Olymp.* 2.

Things for the best, we become more worthy, and more happy than the most fortunate Fool on Earth; we may therein find more true Satisfaction, than any Wealth, or any Glory here can minister: We may have a good Conscience left, (the Sense of having lived well heretofore, or at least a serious Resolution to live well hereafter) and that is a || *continual Feast*, yielding a far more solid and savoury Pleasure, than the most ample Revenue can afford: We may have Hope in God (the Author and Donor of all good Things) and thereby far greater Assurance of our convenient Subsistence and Welfare, than all present Possessions can bestow; we have reserved a free access to the Throne of Grace, and thereby a sure Means (grounded on God's infallible Word and Promise) of obtaining whatever is good for us; we have a firm Right to innumerable Spiritual Blessings and Privileges, each of them justly valuable beyond whole Worlds of Pelf; we can, in a Word (we can if we please) enjoy God's Favour, which immensely transcendeth all other Enjoyments, which vastly more than countervaileth the absence of all other things: Of this, by applying our selves to
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the Love and Service of God, we are infallibly capable; of this no Worldly Force or Fortune can despoil us; we having this, our Condition cannot be poor, contemptible, or pitiful; 'tis indeed thereby most rich, glorious and happy. For how can he be poor that hath the Lord of all Things always ready to supply him; who hath God (as the *Psalmist* is wont to speak) to be † *his Portion for ever*? How can he be despicable, that hath the Honour to have the Sovereign Majesty of the World for his special Friend? How can he be miserable, who enjoyeth the Fountain of all Happiness, who hath *the Light of God's Countenance* to cheer him, who hath the Consolations of God's Holy Spirit to refresh and revive him? What can he want, who, beside his present Interest in all the needful effects of God's bountiful Love, is an Heir of Heaven and everlasting Bliss? Seeing therefore it is in our Power to be religious, seeing we may, if we will (God's Grace concurring, which preventeth us to seek, which never is with-held from those who seek it) be good Christians; seeing nothing can hinder us from fearing God, or can * *separate us from his Love*, neither can any thing render our Condition

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† Psal. 73. 26. 16. 5. 119. 57. 142. 5.

* Rom. 8. 39.

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on bad or unhappy, really distressed or needy: *† *O fear the Lord* (saith the *Psalmist*) *for there is no want to them that fear him: The young Lions* (or the † rich, as the *LXX.* render it) *do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing; and, † Whoso keepeth the Commandment, shall feel no evil thing,* saith the *Wiseman*; and, * *The Hand of our God is upon all them that seek him,* saith the *Prophet*; and, § *Who is he that shall harm you,* (or do ill to you, or make you worse) *if ye be followers of that which is good?* saith *St. Peter*; and † *We know* (saith *St. Paul*) *that to them who love God all things co-operate for good; and || Godliness* (saith he again) *with Contentedness is great Gain*; that is, supposing we have the Goods which Piety ministreth, although we have nothing more, we are, if we can be content, very well to pass; it is abundantly sufficient for us.

Why then, I pray, are we discontent? what do we groan or grieve for: What is it that we do want? Is it the use of Reason, is it Virtue, is it God's Favour? then indeed we have good cause to be displeased; for the want of those things is indeed lamentable; but if we do want them,

*† *Psal.* 34. 9. † *Πλάστοι ἐπιώχουσιν.* *LXX.*

† *Eccl.* 8. 5. * *Ezr.* 8. 22. § *1 Pet.* 3. 13. *Ὁ κανώσων.*

‡ *Rom.* 8. 28. || *1 Tim.* 6. 6.

them, it is only our selves that we should complain of; for we may have them if we will, and who can help it if we will not? Who, if we shall wilfully deprive our selves of them, will be concerned to mind our Complaints? But is it only a lump of Trash, or a puff of Honour, or a flash of Pleasure, that we do need? Is it that we cannot so delicately glut our Bellies, or so finely cloath our Backs, or so thoroughly sooth our Fancies, as we could wish, that we so pitifully moan? Is it being restrained in some Respects from the Swinge of our Humour, is it that we are not so much regarded, or are slighted by some Persons? is it that we are crossed in some Design, that so discomposeth and discourageth us? then are we sottishly fond and childish in our Conceits, and our Affections: For proper it is to Children, when as they want no solid or substantial Goods, to wail for worthless Toys and Trinkets; 'tis for Children, when they have not their Will in petty and impertinent Matters, to cry and lament; Children are much affected with every Word, or little shew that 'crosseth them; If we were (as *St. Paul* chargeth us to be) * *perfect Men*, if we had manly Judgments,

and

* 1 Cor. 14. 20,

and manly Affections toward things, we should not so regard or value any of these temporal and transitory things, either good or evil, as by the want of one sort, or by the Presence of the other, to be much disturbed; we should, with St. Paul, style any present Evil § τὸ ἐλαφρόν τὸ θλίψους, *a lightness of affliction*: we should with him reckon, † *that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glories which shall be revealed to us*; we should with Saint Peter * *greatly rejoice, though for a season we are in heaviness, through manifold trials, or afflictions*: We should esteem any Condition here very tolerable, yea very good.

4. In truth (if we will not mince the matter, and can bear a Truth sounding like a Paradox) usually our Condition is then better, when it seemeth worse; then we have most cause to be glad, when we are aptest to grieve; then we should be thankful, when we do complain; that it appeareth otherwise to us, it is because in our Taxations of things, we do ordinarily judge (or rather not judge, but fancy, not hearing or regarding any dictate of Reason) like Beasts; prizing things merely according to present Sense, or Shew, not
exami-

§ 2 Cor. 4. 17. † Rom. 8. 18. * 1 Pet. 1. 6.

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examining their intrinsick Natures, or looking forward into their proper Fruits and Consequences.

Adversity (or a State, wherein we are not furnished with all Accommodations gateful to Sense or Fancy; or wherein somewhat doth cleave to us offensive to those inferiour Powers of Soul) is the thing which we chiefly loath and abominate; whereas, in true Judgment, * nothing commonly is more necessary, more wholesome, more useful and beneficial to us; nothing is more needful, or conducive to the Health of our Soul, and to our real Happiness, than it: It is the School of Wisdom, wherein our Minds are disciplin'd and improved in the Knowledge of the best things, whence it is termed παιδεία, that is, instructive Chastisement: so *David* found it; † *It is, said he, good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy Statutes;* and our Lord himself, ‡ *ἐμαθεν ἀφ' ὧν ἐπαθε, He learned obedience from*

* — Multoque in rebus acerbis,

Acrius advertunt animos ad religionem. Lucret. 3. p. 64.

Καὶ γὰρ τὸν* τύπον πειρασᾶ, καὶ τὴν ῥαθυμίαν ἐκ-
κόπτει πῶσαν ἢ θλίψιν, καὶ πρὸς ὑπομονὴν αἰετέι
καταλύει ἢ ἀνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων τὴν ἀτέ-
λειαν, καὶ πολλῶν εἰσάγει τὴν φιλοσοφίαν, &c. Chrys.
in 2 Cor. Orat. 26.

† Psal. 119. 71. 1 Cor. 11. 32.

Κεινόμενοι ὑπὸ κυεῖς παιδευόμεθα.

‡ Heb. 5. 8.

from what he suffered. ¶ It is the *Academy* wherein Vertue is acquired and exercised; so God meant it to his People: † *the Lord thy God* (saith *Moses*) *led thee this forty Years in the wilderness, that he might humble thee, and prove thee.* So the *Wise-man* saith, that * *by the sadness of the countenance the Heart is made better:* and, † *that stripes do cleanse the inward parts of the belly.* And ‡ *It yieldeth* (saith the *Apostle*) *the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby.*

It is the *Furnace of the Soul*, wherein it is tried, cleansed and refined from the Dross of vain Conceits, of perverse Humours, of vitious Distempers: * ‡ *When* (saith *Job*) *he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold:* and, *Gold* (saith the *Wise-man*) *is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of § Adversity.*

It is the *Method* whereby God reclaimeth sturdy Sinners to Goodness, engageth them to seek and serve himself; so of the
Isra-

¶ *Miraris tu, si Deus, ille bonorum amantissimus, qui illos quam optimos esse atque excellentissimos vult. fortunam illis cum qua exerceantur, assignat?* Sen. de Prov. 2.

† Deut. 8. 2. * Eccles. 7. 3. † Prov. 20. 30. ‡ Heb. 12. 11. Jam. 1. 3. Rom. 5. 3.

* ‡ Job. 23. 10. (Psal. 66. 10.) Eccles. 2. 5. Sap. 3. 5. (Isa. 1. 25. 48. 10. Mal. 3. 23. Dan. 11. 35.)

§ Hence *πειρασμός* (trial) is the usual Word signifying it. 1 Pet. 1. 6, &c.

*Israelites the Prophet saith, † Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastning was upon them; so † Manasses, when he was in Affliction he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his Fathers; so † Nebuchadnezzar, after being driven from his Kingdom, his understanding returned unto him, and he blessed the most high, and praised and honoured him that liveth for ever. So * David himself, Before, said he, I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word.*

*It is || that whereby God doth prepare Men, and doth entitle them to the blessed Rewards hereafter: Our light affliction (saith *† St. Paul) which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; and, § Ye (saith St. Peter) greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold*

† Isa. 26. 16. 29. 19. Hof. 5. 15. Psal. 78. 34. 107. 4. Eccl. 84. 16.

‡ 2 Chron. 23. 12. † Dan. 3. 34. * Psal. 119. 67.

|| Ἡ γὰρ ἡ πόσις ἐπὶ τῶν ἐπιτάσεως, μισθὸν ἐπὶ τῶν ἐπιτάσεως ὄντι, καὶ ἐρεῖσμα ἀσφαλὲς πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἐκόντας ἐκπεσεῖν. καὶ γὰρ τύπον καλῶς ἐλλείπει, καὶ ῥαθυμίαν ἀποστέφει, καὶ θερμωτέρας ποιεῖ, καὶ ἀλαβερὸς ἐργάζεται, &c. Chryl. Tom. 6. Or. 9.

*† 2 Cor. 4. 17. Heb. 10. 36. ὑπομονὴς ἔχετε χρεῖαν, &c.

§ 1 Pet. 1. 6. 4. 14.

fold temptations; that the trial of your faith being much more pretious than of gold that perisbeth, though it be tried with fire, may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Such is the Nature, such the use, such the Fruits of Adversity.

It is indeed scarce possible, that without * tasting it somewhat deeply, any Man should become in good measure either wise or good. He must be very ignorant of himself (of his own Temper and Inclinations, of the Strength and Forces of his Reason) who hath not met with some Rubs and Crosses to try himself and them with: The greater part of things he must little understand, who hath not experienced the worst part: He cannot skill to wield and govern his Passions, who never had them stirred up, and tossed about by cross Accidents: He can be no good Pilot in Matters of humane Life, who hath not for some time sailed in a rough Sea, in foul Weather, among Sands and Shelves: He could have no good Opportunity of employing thoroughly, or improving his Wit, his Courage, his Industry,

* *Nihil infelicius eo, cui nihil unquam evenit adversi, non licuit enim illi se experiri. Sen. de Provid. 3.
Non fert ullum ictum illa sa felicitas. Ib.*

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stry, who hath had * no Straits to extricate himself from, no Difficulties to surmount, no Hardships to sustain: The Virtues of Humility, of Patience, of Contentedness necessarily must be unknown to him, to whom no Disgraces, no Wants, no fore Pains have arrived, by well enduring which, those Virtues are learnt, and planted in the Soul: Scarce can he become very charitable, or compassionate to others, who never † himself hath felt the Smart of Affliction, or Inconveniencies of any Distress; for even, as the *Apostle* teacheth us, our Saviour himself was obliged ‡ *to suffer tribulation*, that he thence might become *merciful*, and *disposed to succour the afflicted*. (No wonder, if he *that liveth in continual Prosperity*, be a || *Nabal*, churlish and discourteous, insensible of other Mens Grievances :) And how can he express much † Piety or Love to God, who is not (in Submission to God's Will, and for his sake) put to suffer any thing grievous, or want
any

* *Qua latet, inque bonis cessat non cognita rebus,
Apparet virtus, arguiturque malis.* Ovid. *Trist.* 4. 3.

† *Non ignara mali miseris succurrere disco.* *Æn.* 2.

‡ *Heb.* 2. 17, 18. 4. 15, 16. || *1 Sam.* 25. 3, &c.

† *Cum molestia in hujus vite fragilitate crebrescunt, æternam requiem nos desiderare compellunt. Mundus quippe iste periculosior est blandus, quàm molestus, & magis cavendus quàm se illicit diligi, quàm cum admonet, cogitque contemni.*
Aug. Ep. 144.

94 *Of Contentment.* Serm. III.

any thing desirable? When can he employ any great Faith or Hope in God, who never hath any visible need of Succour, or Relief from him, who hath other present Aids to confide in? How can he purely delight in God, and place his sole Felicity in him? How can he thoroughly relish spiritual things, whose Affections are taken up by an Affluence of other Goods, whose Appetites are glutted with Enjoyment of other Delights? What but Depri-
 vation of these things can lay open * the Vanity, the Deceitfulness and Slipperiness of them? What but Crosses and Disappointments here can † withdraw our Minds from a fond Admiration, and eager Affection toward this World? What but the want of these Joys and Satisfaction, can drive us to seek our Felicity elsewhere? When ‖ *the deceit of riches* possesseth us, how can we judge right of things? when Cares about them distract us, how can we think about any thing that ‡ is good? When their Snares entangle us, and their Clogs incumber us, how can we be free and expedite in doing Good? § When Abundance

* *Ardua nam res est opibus non tradere mores.* Mart.

† *Munera ista fortuna putatis? insidia sunt.* Sen. Ep. 8.
Viscata beneficia. Ib.

‖ Matt. 13. 22. ‡ 1 Tim. 6. 9. Luc. 10. 41.

§ Deut. 32. 15. Prov. 1. 32. 30. 9. Hos. 13. 6.
 Psal. 30. 6. Jer. 22. 21. Amos 6. 1, &c.

Serm. III. Of Contentment. 95

bundance fatneth our Hearts, and Ease softneth our Spirits, and Success puffeth up our Minds, when Pride, Sensuality, Stupidity and Sloth (the almost inseparable Adherents to large and prosperous Estates) do continually insinuate themselves into us, What Wisdom, what Virtue are we like to have?

Seeing then * Adversity is so wholesome and useful, the Remedy of so great Mischiefs, the Cause of so great Benefits to us, why should we be displeased therewith? † To be displeased with it, is to be displeased with that which is most needful, or most convenient for us; to be displeased with the Health and Welfare of our Souls; that we are rescued from Errors and Vices, with all their black Train of Miseries and Mischiefs; to be displeased that we are not detained under the Reign of Folly and Wickedness, that we are not inevitably made Fools and Beasts. To be disgusted with Providence for Affliction or Poverty, is no other than as we should be angry

* *Gratulari & gaudere nos decet dignatione divina castigationis — O servum illum beatum, cujus emendationi Dominus instat; cui dignatur irasci, quem admonendi dissimulatione non decipit.* Tertull. de Pat. 11.

† *Ὁ ἁμαρτάνων καὶ μὴ κολάζῃ, πάντων ὄντων ἀδελώτερος, &c.* Chrys. ἀνθρ. 5.

gry with our † Physician for administering a Purge, or for prescribing Abstinence to us; as if we should fret at our Chirurgeon for searching our Wounds, or applying needful Corrosives; as if we should complain of the Hand which draweth us from a Precipice, or § *pulleth us out of the fire.*
 * *Many Benefits (saith Seneca) have a sad and rough Countenance, as to burn and cut in order to healing: Such a Benefit of God is Adversity to us; and as such with a gladsome and thankful Mind should we receive it.*

If with a diligent Observation we consult Experience, we shall find, † that as many have great Cause to bewail, that they have been rich, that they have been blinded and corrupted with Prosperity, that they have ** *received their Consolation here;* so many have great Reason to be glad, that they have been || poor, that they have been dis-

† ἡ νοσούντων ἰατροίαι, ἢ ὑγιαίνόντων γυμνασίαι.
 Simpl.

Κρείττων ἐνυμερίας ἀχαλινώτε νόσος φιλόσοφος.
 Naz. Ep. 66. § Jud. 23.

* *Beneficia multa tristem & asperam frontem habent, quem admodum urere, & secare, ut sanes.* Sen. de Benef. 5. 20.

† *Horrorem operis fructus excusat.* Terr. Scorp. 5.

** Luc. 6. 24. Jam. 5. 1. Am. 6. 1, &c.

|| Let our Condition be what it will, we are the same. It doth not change us in our intrinsick Worth, or State. It is a but a Garment about us, or as Weather.

— *Ego utrum,*

Nave ferar magnâ an parvâ, ferar unus & idem. Hor. Epist. 2. 2.

disappointed, that they have tasted the bitter Cup; it having instructed and corrected them; it having render'd them sober and considerate, industrious and frugal, mindful of God, and devout toward him: And, what we may rejoice in when past, why should we not bear contentedly when present? Why should not the Expectation of such good Fruits satisfy us?

Why should not such a Condition, being so plainly better in it self, seem also better unto us? We cannot, if we are reasonable, but approve it in our Judgment; why then are we not fully reconciled unto it in our Affection?

F **O** **F**

O F
CONTENTMENT.

The Fourth S E R M O N.

PHIL. IV. II.

I have learned in whatsoever state, &c.

V. **B**UT farther; Let our State be, as to Quality, what it will, good or bad, joyful or unpleasant, we may yet consider, that it cannot be desperate, it may not be lasting; for there is not any necessary Connexion between the present and the future: wherefore, as the present being momentary and transient, can little trouble us, so the future being unknown and uncertain, should not dismay us. As no Man reasonably can be elevated with Confidence in a good State, presuming on its Duration, (* *Boast not thy self of to morrow, for thou*

Serm. IV. Of Contentment. 99

thou knowest not what a day may bring forth) so no Man should be † dejected for a bad one, in Suspicion that it will abide long; seeing neither (considering the frequent Vicissitudes that occur, and the flux Nature of all things here) is each of them, in it self, stable; and the Continuance of each absolutely dependeth on God's Arbitrary Disposall; and as God often doth overturn Prosperity, to humane Judgment most firmly grounded, so he most easily can redress the (to Appearance) most forlorn Adversity; and he, being especially ‡ *the helper of the helpless*, doth frequently perform it: As he poureth contempt upon Princes, and weakneth the strength of the mighty; so he raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghil: He casteth down the mighty from their seat, and exalteth the humble and meek: He sendeth the rich empty away, and filleth the hungry with good things. He maketh sore, and bindeth up, he woundeth and his hands make whole.

F 2

Con-

† *Multa intervenient quibus vicinum periculum vel prope admotum aut subsistat, aut desinat, aut in alienum caput transeat.* Sen.

‡ Psal. 72. 12. 107. 9. 10. 4. 106. 9. Job. 12. 21. Psal. 107. 40. Isa. 25. 5. Job. 5. 11. Isa. 2. 11. Psal. 18. 27. Psal. 113. 7. 107. 41. Job. 5. 18. 1 Sam. 2. 7.

Considering therefore § the Reason of things, and the Nature of God, if our State be at present bad or sorrowful, we have more Reason to hope for its Amendment, than to fear its Continuance. If indeed * things went on in a fatal Track, merely according to a blind and heedless Chance, or a stiff and unalterable Necessity; if there were no Remedy from God's Providence, or Support by his Grace to be expected (although even then there would be no Reason to grieve or complain (Grief would be unreasonable because unprofitable, Complaint would be vain, because Fortune and Fate are deaf) yet our Infirmary might somewhat excuse that idle Proceeding; but since † *not a Sparrow falleth to the ground, not a hair of our head perisheth*; nothing at all passeth otherwise, than by the voluntary Disposition of a most wise and gracious God; since he doth always strictly view, and is very sensible of our Grievs; yea doth in a manner sympathize with them (according to those pa-

thetical

§ Τοῖς γε γὰρ ἔχουσι καὶ σώφρονι λογισμῷ κεχρη-
 μένοις ἔδεν ἢ ἀνθρώπων ἀδόκητον. ἔδεν γὰρ το-
 τῶν σαθερὲν ἢ βέλαιον, &c. Theol. Ep. 14.

* *Sperat adversis, metuit secundis,*

Alteram sortem bene preparatam pectus. Hor. Carm. 2. 10.

† Matt. 10. 29, 30. Luc. 21. 18.

Serm. IV. *Of Contentment.* 101

thetical Expressions in the Prophets; § *His bowels sound, and are troubled; his heart is turned within him; In all their afflictions he was afflicted.*) Since he farther hath by Promise obliged himself † to *care for us*, to support and succour us; we have all Reason to hope, yea firmly to believe (if at least we can find in our Hearts to hope, and to believe) that we shall, as soon as it is good and expedient for us, find Relief and Ease; we shall have that || *ἐνκαιρὸν* *Con-*
θίσαι, that *seasonable succour*, of which the Apostle to the *Hebrews* speaketh.

Hope lieth at the Bottom of the worst Condition that can be; † *The poor* (saith *Job's Friend*) *hath hope*; and the Rich can have no more; the future being equally close to both; the one can have no greater Assurance to keep what he hath, than the other hath to get what he needeth; yea clearly the Poor hath the Advantage in the Case; for God hath more declared, that he will relieve the poor Man's Want, than that he will preserve the rich Man's Store. If then we have in every Condition a Hope present to us, Why do we † *grieve as those who have no hope?* Ha-
F 3 ving

§ Hof. 11. 8. Jer. 31. 20. Isa. 63. 9. 15.

† Luc. 12. 29. § 1. Heb. 13. 5. Mat. 6. 33. Phil. 4. 6.

1 Pet. 5. 7. Psal. 55. 23. 37. 5.

* Heb. 4. 6. || Job 5. 16.

‡ 1 Thes. 4. 13. Heb. 6. 19.

ving ever ready the best Anchor that can be to rest upon (for in this rolling Sea of Humane Affairs, there is no firmer Anchor than Hope) Why do we let our Minds be tossed with discontentful Sollicitudes and Fears? Why do we not rather (as the *Apostle* injoineth) § *rejoice in hope*, than grieve out of Despair? Why do we not, as the *Prophet* adviseth, || *Hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord?* the Effect of so reposing our selves for the future on God's Providence, would be perfect Content and Peace; according to that of the *Prophet*, ‡ *Thou wilt keep him in perfect Peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee;* And that of the *Wise-man*, † *A patient man will bear for a time, and afterwards joy shall spring up unto him.*

The truth is, and it seemeth very observable, in order to our Purpose, that most Discontent ariseth, not from the Sense of incumbent Evil, but from Suspicion or Fear of somewhat to come: Although God at present dispenseth a Competency of Food and Raiment, although we are in a tolerable Condition, and feel no Extremity of Want or Pain, yet not descrying

§ Rom. 12. 12. || Lam. 3. 26. ‡ Isa. 26. 3.
† Ecclus. 1. 23.

Serm. IV. Of Contentment. 103

ing the way of a † future Provision for us, answerable to our Desires, we do trouble our selves; which Demeanour implieth great Ignorance and Infidelity: We think God obliged in Kindness, not only to bestow upon us what is needful in its Season, but to furnish us with Stores, and allow us Securities: we must have somewhat in Hand, or we cannot trust him for the future; this is that which our Saviour cautioneth against, as the Root of Discontent and Sign of Diffidence; ‡ *Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of it self. Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof:* An Advice no less pious, than manifestly full of Reason and Wisdom. For * what a palpable Folly is it to anticipate that Evil which we would avoid; then, when|| we earnestly desire to put off Sorrow, to pull it towards us; to feel that Mischiefe, which possibly shall never be; to give it a Being in our Fancy, which it may never have in

F 4

Na-

† Πολλῆς μικροβυχίας ἐσιν ὑπὲρ τῶ ὕστερον συζηησομένων, ἢ μηδὲ ὅλως συζηησομένων τινὶ ἀδυσμιν ἥδη καρπῶς καὶ κόπτεσθαι. Chyrs. ad Stagir. 2.

‡ Matt. 6. 34.

* Calamitosus est animus futuri anxius, & ante miseriam miser. Sen. Ep. 18.

|| Ne sis miser ante tempus; cum illa qua velut imminetia exparisti, fortasse nunquam ventura sint, certe nondum venerint, &c. Sen. Ep. 13.

104 *Of Contentment.* Sermon. IV.

Nature? Could we § follow this Advice, never resenting Evils before they come, never prejudging about future Events against God's Providence, and our own Quiet; constantly depending on the divine Care for us; not taking false Alarms, and trembling at things which shall never come near us; not being disturbed with panick Fears, no Discontent could ever seize upon us; for the present is ever supportable; our Mind cannot be overwhelm'd by the Pangs of a transitory Moment.

If we need farther Encouragement for Application of this Remedy, we have manifold Experiments to assure its Vertue: as there are * innumerable Promises, that none who hope in God shall be disappointed, so there are many illustrious Examples of those, whom God hath in remarkable manner and wonderful measure relieved from Wants and Distresses, raising them out of deepest Poverty, Contempt and worldly Wretchedness, into most eminent Degrees of Wealth and Prosperity: † *Look (saith the Hebrew Sage) into the ancient*

§ *Quid juvat dolori suo occurrere? satis cito dolebis cum venerit.* Ibid.

Quoties incerta erunt maria, tibi fave. Ibid.

* Lam. 3. 25. Isa. 30. 18. 40. 31. 49. 23. Psal. 25. 3. 37. 9. 9. 10. 2 Chron. 28. 9. Ezra 8. 22. Amos 5. 4. 2 Chron. 15. 2. † Eccles. 2. 10.

Serm. IV. Of Contentment. 105

cient generations, and see; *Who hath trusted in the Lord, and hath been ashamed? Or who hath abiden in his fear, and hath been forsaken? Or who hath invoked him, and he did over-look (or despise) him?* If we look into those Generations, we may there find *Joseph*, out of Slavery, and out of Prison, advanced to be the chief Governour of a most flourishing Kingdom: *Moses*, from an Exile, and a Vagrant, made the Redeemer and Commander of a populous Nation: *Job* § out of extream Poverty and Disgrace, restored to be in Wealth and Honour twice greater than *the greatest men of the East*: *Daniel* out of Captivity and Persecution, become President of the greatest Monarchy on Earth: *David* raised out of great Meanness to highest Dignity, restored out of extream Straits into a most prosperous State; according to those Words of Admiration and Acknowledgement: || *O what great troubles and adversities hast thou shewed me! and yet didst thou turn and refresh me, yea and broughtest me from the deep of the earth again: Thou hast brought me to great honour, and comforted me on every side:* Thus hath God eminently done with divers, thus we may be assured that he will do competently with us, if with the like

F 5

Faith

§ Job 42. 10. 1. 3. || Psal. 71. 18. 69. 29. 18. 36.

Faith and Patience, we do, as they did, rely and wait upon him.

6. But farther, imagine or suppose, that our Condition (so irksome to us at present) will certainly hold on to the utmost; yet consider also, that it soon will cease, and change of it self: Since we are mortal, our Evils cannot be perpetual, we cannot long be infested with them.

As it may debase, and embitter all the Prosperity in the World, to consider, that it is very fading and short-lived, that its Splendour is but a Blaze, its Pleasure but a Flash, its Joy but as the * *crackling of thorns*; so it should abate, and sweeten any Adversity, to remember that it is § passing away, and suddenly will be gone. Put, I say, the worst case that can be, that it were certainly determined, and we did as certainly know it, that those things which cause our Displeasure, should continue thro' our whole Life; yet since our Life it self will soon be spun out, and with it all our worldly Evils will vanish, Why are we troubled? What is said of our selves, must in consequence be truly applied

* Eccl. 7. 6.

§ (Psal. 27. 13.) *I had fainted, if I had not believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*

Serm. IV. Of Contentment. 107

plied to them; † *They flee like a shadow, and continue not*; they are winds passing and coming not again; they are vapours appearing for a little time, and then vanishing away; they wither like grass, and fade away as a leaf; they may die before us, they cannot out-live us: our Life is but † *a hand breadth*; And can then our Evils have any vast bulk? *Our age is as nothing*, And || can any Crosses therein be then any great matter? How can any thing so very short, be very intolerable? It is but ὀλίγον ἄρτι λυπη-
θέντες, being (as St. Peter speaketh) § *a little while yet aggrieved*; it is but μικρὸν ὅσον ὅσον, *a small quantity, whatever it be, of time*, as the Apostle to the Hebrews saith, that * *we need patience*; it is but τὸ πα-
ραυτίχα ἐλαφρόν τῆς θλίψεως, †† *an affli-
ction for a present moment*; and therefore, as St. Paul intimateth, *light and inconfi-
derable that we are to undergo*. We have but a very narrow strait of Time to pass over, but we shall land on the firm and vast Continent of Eternity; when we shall be freed from all the troublesome Agita-
tions, from all the perillous Storms, from
all

† 1 Chron. 29. 15. Psal. 78. 39. Jam. 4. 14. Psal.
90. 5. Isa. 64. 6. 40. 6. † Psal. 39. 5.

|| *Omnia brevia tolerabilia esse debent, etiamsi magna.*
Cic. Læl. § 1 Pet. 1. 6.

* Heb. 10. 26, 27. †† 2 Cor. 4. 17.

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all the nauseous Qualms of this Navigation; Death (which may be very near, which cannot be far off) is a sure Haven from all the Tempests of Life, a safe Refuge from all the Persecutions of the World, an infallible Medicine for all the Diseases of our Mind, and of our State; it will enlarge us from all Restraints, it will discharge all our Debts, it will ease us from all our Toils, it will stifle all our Cares, it will veil all our Disgraces; it will still all our Complaints, and bury all our Disquiets; it will wipe all Tears from our Eyes, and banish all Sorrow from our Hearts; it perfectly will level all * Conditions, setting the High and Low, the Rich and Poor, the Wise and Ignorant all together upon even Ground; smothering all the Pomp and Glories, swallowing all the Wealth and Treasures of the World.

It is therefore but holding out a † while, and all our Molestation, of its own accord, will expire; Time certainly will cure us; but it is better that we should owe that Benefit to Reason, and let it presently comfort us: It is better, by rational

* Ἰσος χῶρος ἅσπασι. πένησι τε καὶ βασιλεύσιν.
Πάντες ἴσοι κέχυες. Phocyl.

† Κρεῖττον—

Ὁ μέλλεις τῷ χεῖνῳ χαίρειν, τοῦτο χαίρειν
τῷ λόγῳ. Plut. ad Apoll.

Serm. IV. Of Contentment. 109

tional Consideration, to work Content in ourselves, using the brevity and frailty of our Life as an Argument to sustain us in our Adversity, than only to find the end thereof as a natural and necessary means of Evasion from it.

Serious Reflections upon our Mortality, is indeed, upon many accounts, a powerful Antidote against Discontent; being apt to extirpate the most radical Causes thereof.

Is it because we much admire these worldly Things, that we so much grieve for the want of them? This will quell that Admiration; For how can we admire them, if we consider, how in regard to us they are so very Transitory and Evanid? How can we deem them much worth the having, when we can, for so little Time, enjoy them, must so very soon quite part from them?

How can we dote on the World, seeing † *The world* (as St. John saith) *passeth away, and the desire thereof?*

How can we value any worldly Glory, since || *All the glory of men is* (as St. Peter telleth us) *as the flower of the grass; since, as the Psalmist saith, § Man in honour abideth not, but is like the beasts that perish?*

† 1 John 2. 7. 1 Cor. 7. 31. Eccl. 1. 3. &c.
|| 1 Pet. 2. 24. § Psal. 49. 12. 82. 6.

How can we || *set our heart* on Riches; considering that *Riches are not for ever*, nor can (as the *Wise-man* saith) *deliver from death*; that, as *St. James* admonisheth, † *The rich man fadeth in his ways*; that it may be said to any rich Man, as it was to him in the Gospel; * *Thou fool, this night thy life shall be required of thee, and what thou hast prepared, to whom shall it fall?* How can we fantasie Pleasure, seeing it is but *πρόσκαιρος ἀπόλαυσις*, † a very temporary fruition; seeing however we do § eat, or drink, or play, it followeth, the *morrow we shall die?*

How can we even admire any secular Wisdom, or Knowledge, seeing that it is (as the *Psalmist* telleth us) true of every Man, that — ||† *his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish*; particularly it is seen that *wise men die*, no otherwise than as *† *the foolish and brutish person perisheth*; that, as *Solomon* with regret observed, §† *There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither we are going.*

Do we admire the Condition of those, who, upon the Stage, do appear in the

|| Prov. 27. 24. 11. 4. † Jam. 1. 11.

* Luke 12. 20. † Heb. 11. 25. § 1 Cor. 15. 32.

||† Psal. 46. 4. *† Psal. 49. 10.

§† Eccles. 9. 10. 2. 14.

Serm. IV. *Of Contentment.* III

the State of Kings, do act the part of wealthy Men, do talk gravely and wisely like Judges or Philosophers for an hour or two? If we do not admire those shadows and mockeries of State, why do we admire any appearances upon this Theatre of the World, which are scarce a whit less deceitful, or more durable than they?

Is it an envious or disdainful Regret at the Advantages of others before us (of others perhaps that are unworthy and unfit, or that are, as we conceit, no more worthy and capable than our selves) that gnaweth our Heart? Is it, that such Persons are more wealthy, more honourable, in greater favour or repute, than we, that vexeth us? The consideration how little Time those slender Pre-eminences will last, may (if better Remedies want due efficacy) serve toward rooting out that Disease; the *Psalmist* doth several times prescribe it; * *Fret not thy self* (saith he) *against evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity, for they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb*; and again, † *Be not afraid when one is made rich, and when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away,*
his

* *Psal.* 37. 1, 2. † *Psal.* 49. 17.

his glory shall not descend after him: And he being fallen into this scurvy Distemper, did follow his own prescription, ‡ I was (saith he) envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked — untill I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end; surely thou didst set them in slippery places — How are they brought into desolation as in a moment? So likewise doth Solomon prescribe: || Let not (saith he) thine heart envy sinners; Why not? because surely there is an end, and thine expectation shall not be cut off: There will be a close of his undeserved Prosperity, and a good Success to thy well-grounded Hope. So whatever doth breed Discontent, the Reflexion upon our mortal and frail State will be apt to remove it.

*It was that which comforted Job, and fortified his Patience under so grievous Pressures: § All the days of my appointed time (said he) I will wait till my change come: He would not be weary, while he lived, of his Afflictions, * because the days of man are few, and full of trouble: If they are full of trouble, and that be a sadning Consideration; yet they are few, and that maketh amends, that is Comfortable.*

7. I

‡ Psal. 73. 3. 17.

§ Job 14. 14. 1.

|| Prov. 23. 17. 18.

* Gen. 47. 9.

Serm. IV. *Of Contentment.* 113

7. I add, that it is somewhat Consolatory to consider, that the worse our Condition is here, the better we may hope our future State will be; the more Trouble and Sorrow we endure, the less of worldly Satisfaction we enjoy here, the less Punishment we have to fear, the more Comfort we may hope to find hereafter; for as it is a woful thing to have received *our portion*, to have enjoyed *our consolation in this life*, so 'tis a happy thing to have undergone our Pain here. A Purgatory under ground is probably a Fable; but a Purgatory upon Earth hath good Foundations: God is wont so to order it, that all Men, that especially good Men, shall undergo it; for, † *What Son is there whom the Father doth not chasten?* ‡ *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution.*

8. A like Consolation it is to consider, that Wealth and Prosperity are great Talents, for the Improvement of which we must render a strict Account, so that *to whom much is given, from him much shall be required*; so that they are, in effect, a Burthen; from which Poverty includes an exemption; for the less we have, the less we have to do, the less we are responsible for; our Burthen is smaller, our Account will be more easie.

9. I

† Heb. 12. 7. ‡ 2 Tim. 3. 12.

114 *Of Contentment.* Sermon. IV.

9. I shall in reference to our Condition, and the nature of those things which cause our Discontent, but propose one Consideration more, or ask one Question: || What is it that we do want, or wait for? Is it any Good we want, which by our Care and Industry we can procure? Is it any Evil that afflicteth us, which by the like means we can evade? If it be so, why then do we not vigorously apply our selves to the Business? Why do we not, instead of idle Vexation, and ineffectual Complaints, use the means offered for our Relief? Do we like and love Trouble? § let us then be content to bear it; let us hug it, and keep it close; if not, let us employ the Forces afforded us by Nature, and by Occasion, to repell and remove it.

But if we grieve and moan, because we cannot obtain some Good above our reach, or not decline some unavoidable Evil, what do we thereby but palpably express our Folly, and wilfully heighten our Woe; adding voluntary Displeasure to the heap of

|| Τῶν μὴ δυνατῶν ἐφίεσθαι ἀνδραποδῶδες ἢ ἡλίδιον, ξένον, δεσμάχην, ὅς ὡς μόνον οἶόν τε, τοῖς δόγμασιν τοῖς ἑαυτῶν. Εἰσα. 3. 24.

§ ---- Πράως φέρε, μηδ' ἀγανάκηται,

Εἰδὼς ὅτι πρέπει, καθ' ὅσον δύνη. Aur. Carm.

Serm. IV. *Of Contentment.* 115

of necessary Want or Pain; impressing more deeply on our selves the Sense of them? In such a case * *Patience* is instead of a Remedy, which, though it do not thoroughly cure the Malady, yet it somewhat † *alleviateth* it, preventing many bad Symptoms, and asswaging the Paroxysms thereof. What booteth it to wince and kick against our Fortune? ‡ To do so will inflame us, and make us foam, but will not relieve or ease us: If we cannot get out of the Net, or the Cage, to flutter and flounce will do nothing but batter and bruise us.

4thly. But farther, to allay our Discontents, let us consider the World, and general state of Men here.

1. Look *first* upon the World, as it is commonly managed, and ordered by Men: Thou perhaps art displeased, that thou dost

* — *Levius fit patientia*

Quicquid corrigere est nefas. Hor.

† *Animus aquus optimum est arumna condimentum,* Plaut. Rud.

‡ Ἐπὶ ζημίᾳ χρημάτων, καὶ θανάτῳ, καὶ ἀρρώστια, καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς τοῖς συμπίπτουσιν ἡμῖν δεινοῖς ἀλγύνης καὶ ἀδυμνήτες ἐ μόνον ἐδεμίαν ὑπὸ ταύτης καρπέμεθα ὡραμυθίαν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπιτείνοντες τὰ δεινά. Chryf. Ἀνδρ. 3.

Οἱ ὅ τῳ πάθει δαλωθέντες ἐδὲν ᾧ κερδαίνουσιν ὀλοφρονέμενοι, ἀνιστῶντες ὅ βιώσονται, καὶ παροξυνῶσι τῶν ἄλλων τὴν ἡγεμόνα. Theod. Ep. 15.

dost not prosper and thrive therein, that thou dost not share in the Goods of it; that its Accommodations and Preferments are all snapt from thee; that thy Pretences are not satisfied, and thy Designs fail; this thou dost take to be somewhat hard and unequal, and therefore art grieved. But if thou art wise, thou shouldst not wonder; if thou art good, thou shouldst not be vexed hereat; for thou hast not, perhaps, any capacity for this World; thy Temper and Disposition are not framed to suite with its Way; thy Principles and Rules do clash with it; thy Resolutions and Designs do not well comport with Prosperity here; thou canst not, or wilt not use the Means needful to compass worldly Ends: Thou perhaps hast a meek, quiet, modest, sincere, steady Disposition; thou canst not be pragmatistical and boisterous, eager and fierce, importunately troublesome, intolerably confident, unaccountably versatile and various: Thou hast certain pedantick Notions about Right and Wrong, certain romantick Fancies about another World (unlike to this) which thou dost stiffly adhere to, and which have an Influence upon thy Actions: Thou hast a squeamish Conscience, which cannot relish this, cannot digest that advantageous course of Proceeding;

ceeding; a scrupulous Humour that hampereth thee, and curbeth thee from attempting many Things which would serve thy Purpose; thou hast a spice of silly Generosity, which maketh divers profitable ways of Acting (such as forging and feigning, supplanting others by Detraction and Calumny, soothing and flattering People) to be below thee, and unworthy of thee: Thou thinkest thy self obliged, and art peremptorily resolved to observe strict Rules of Justice, of Humanity, of Charity, to speak as thou meanest, to do as thou wouldst be done to, to wrong no Man anywise, to consider and tender the Case of other Men as thine own: Thy Designs are honest and moderate, conducive to (or at least consistent with) the publick Good, injurious or hurtful to no Man: Thou carriest on thy Designs by fair Ways, by a modest Care, and harmless Diligence; nor canst be drawn to use any other, how seemingly needful soever, which do favour of Fraud, Violence, any sort of Wrong or Baseness: Thou hast an honest pride and haughtiness of Mind, which will not let thee condescend to use those sly Tricks, crooked Ways and Shifts, which commonly are the compendious and most effectual Ways of accomplishing Designs here: Thou art, in fine (like *Helvidius*

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vidius Priscus) in thy Dealings and Proceedings, *pervicax recti*, wilfully and peevishly honest: Such an one perhaps thou art, and such is thy Way; and canst thou hope to be any Body, or get any Thing here? Shall such a superstitious Fop, such a conscientious Simpleton, such a bashful Sneaksby, || so phantastick a Philosopher pretend to any Thing here? No, thou art here *piscis in arido*, quite out of thy Element; this World is not for *thee* to thrive in.

This World is for Worldlings to possess and enjoy; *It was* (say the *Rabbins*) *made for the presumptuous*; and although God did not altogether design it for them, yet Men have almost made it so: They are best qualified to Thrive in it, who can lustily bustle and scramble; who can fiercely swagger and huff; who can fawn; who can wind and wriggle like a Serpent; who can finely cog and gloze; § who can neatly shuffle and juggle; who can shrewdly over-reach and undermine others; those slippery wily Artists, who can veere any whither with any Wind; those

|| Τὸ τὸ ἡδὺς γαλιών τε καὶ ἀτεχνον καὶ πρὸς τὰς
καὶ βίαις σεραῖς ταύτας ἀνεπίσηδος. Naz. Ep. 63.

§ Quod facillimum factu est, pravus, & callidus bonus
& modestos anteibat. Tac. Hist. 1.

those Men of impregnable Confidence, who can insist upon any Pretences; who can be indefatigably and irresistibly Urgent, nor will be repulsed or baffled by any Means; those who have a Temper so lax and supple, that they can bend it to any Compliance advantageous to them; who have a Spirit so limber, that they can stretch it any whither; who have Face enough, and Conscience little enough to do any thing; who have no certain Principles, but such as will sort with their Interests; no Rules but such *Lesbian* and leaden ones, that easily may be accommodated to their Purposes; * whose Designs all tend to their own private Advantage, without any regard to the Publick, or to the Good of others; who can use any means conducive to such Designs, boggling at nothing which serveth their Purpose; not caring what they say, be it true or false; what they do, be it right or wrong, so it seem Profitable: This is called Wisdom, Prudence, Dexterity, Ability, knowledge of Men, and of the World, and I know not what beside; in the *Scripture*, the *wisdom of the world*, and
of

* Ἐφιάλτης σεβήνην ὁνειδίσαντες αὐτῷ τὴν πε-
νίαν, τὸ δ' ἕτερον, ἔφη, διὰ τι ἐλέγεις; ὅτι δίκαιός
ἐμι. Ael. 13. 39.

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of the flesh, craft, guile, deceit, νοβεία, &c. For such Persons it is to flourish in this World; † *Behold, these* (saith the Psalmist) *are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; and who encrease in riches; They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men; Their eyes stand out with fatness, they have more than heart could wish: They it is who* ‡ *love the World, who seek it, who study and labour for it, who spend all their Time, and employ all their Care about it; And is it not fit they should have it? Is it not a pity they should miss it? Is it not natural, that they who sow to the flesh, should reap from the flesh? Should not they who use the proper Means, obtain the End? Should not they arrive at the Place, who proceed in the direct Road thither?*

But for thee, who canst not find in thy Heart to use the Means, why dost thou hope to compass the End; or grieve for not attaining it? Why dost thou blend and jumble such Inconsistences together, as the eager Desires of this, and the Hopes of another World? It becometh not such a Gallant to whine and pule. If thou wilt be brave, be brave indeed, singly and thoroughly; be not a double-hearted Mongrel;

† Psal. 73. 12. 5. 7. ‡ 1 Joh. 2. 16.

grel; think not of satisfying thy Mind, and driving on other Interests together; of enjoying the Conceit of being an honest Man, with the Design of being a rich or great Man; of arriving to the Happiness of the other World, and attaining Prosperity in this: Wouldst thou enjoy both these? What Conscience is there in that? Leave rather this World unto those, who are more fit for it, who seem better to deserve it, who venture so much, and take such pains for it; do not go to rob them of this slender Reward; but with content see them to enjoy the Fruits of their Labour and Hazard: Be thou satisfied with the Consequences of thy virtuous Resolutions and Proceedings; if it be worth thy while to live Innocently, Modestly, and Conscientiously, do it, and be satisfied; spoil not thine Expectations by repining at the want of those Things, which thy Circumstances render incompatible with them: Follow effectually the holy *Patriarchs* and *Apostles*, who, without regret, forsook all, and chearfully went thither, whither Conscience and Duty called them: If thou art not willing to do so, why dost thou pretend to the same Principles, or hope for the like Rewards? But leaving the consideration of the World as Man hath made it; consider that this

G

World

World is not in its nature or design, a place of * perfect Ease and Convenience, of pure Delight and Satisfaction: What is this World but a Region of Tumult and Trouble; a Theatre of Vanity and Disasters; the Kingdom of Care, of Fear, of Grief and Pain; of Satiety, of Disappointment, of Regret and Repentance?

We came not hither to do our Will, or enjoy our Pleasure; † we are not born to make Laws for our selves, or to pick our Condition here: No, this World is a place of Banishment from our first Country, and the original Felicity we were designed to; this Life is a state of Travel toward another *better country*, and seat of Rest; and well it is, in such Cases, (well it is, I say, for us as Exiles and Travellers) if we can find any tolerable Accommodation, if we can make any hard shift; it should not be strange to us, if in this our Peregrination we do meet with rough Passages, foul Ways, hard Lodging, scant or coarse Fare; if we complain of such things, we do not surely consider where we are, whence we came, whither we are going; we forget that

* 1 Cor. 10. 13.

Παραίτητον ἐστὶν ὁ βίος τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐκ γῆς. Job 7. 1. Chrys. *ad Stag.* 2. (p. 106.)

† Οὐ νομοθετικοὶτες ἡλδοῦμεν τὸν βίον, &c. Plut. *ad Apollon.*

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that we are the Sons of *Adam*, the Heirs of Sin and Sorrow, who have forfeited our Rest and Joy upon Earth; we consider not, how unavoidable the Effects are of that fatal Condemnation and Curse, which followed our first Transgression, we mind not that the perfection and purity of the Blessings we have lost, is not to be found on this side the celestial Paradise. † This World is purposely made somewhat unpleasant to us, lest we should overmuch delight in it, be unwilling to part with it, wish to set up our Rest here, and say, *Bonum est esse hic; It is good for us to be here.*

This Life is a state of Probation and Exercise, like to that (which prefigured and represented it) of God's People in the Wilderness, wherein || *God leadeth us thro' many Difficulties and Hazards, in many Wants and Hardships, to humble and prove us, in order to the fitting us for another more happy State.*

G 2

§ No

† Δια τὸτο καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐπίπονον φύσει, καὶ μοχθηρὸν ἡμῶν τὸν βίον κατεσκεύαζεν, ἵνα ὑπο ἐπιμύδα συνωδῇ-
μενοι θλίψεως, ἐπιθυμίαν τῆς μελλόντων λάβωμεν αἰ-
ῶνος, &c. Chrys. ἀνδρ. 5.

|| Deut. 8. 23.

Λογίζεσθαι χρὴ, ὅτι ὁ μὲν τῆς ἐπάθλων, καὶ τῆς σε-
φάνων καιρὸς, ὁ μέλλον ἐστὶν αἰὼν τῆς ὅ παλαισμά-
των καὶ τῆς ἰδρώτων παρῶν. Chrys. ad Stagir. 2.

§ *No temptation therefore (or Affliction) can seize upon us, but such as is human; that is, such as is natural and proper to Men; 'tis the Consideration which St. Paul useth to comfort and support us in Troubles; and a plainly good one it is, for seeing * Man (as Eliphaz saith) is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward; that nothing is more natural to any thing † than Trouble is to us; if we are displeased therewith, we are in effect ‡ displeased that we are Men; it implieth that we gladly would put off our Nature, and cease to be our selves; we grieve that we are come to live in || this World; and as well might we be vexed that we are not Angels, or that we are not yet in Heaven, which is the only place exempt from Inconveniencies and Troubles, where alone *† there is no sorrow, no clamour, no pain.*

It hath always been, and it will ever be an universal Complaint and Lamentation,

§ Πειρασμός υμᾶς ἐκ εἰληφεν εἰ μὴ ἀνθρώπινος.

1 Cor. 10. 13.

Ecclus. 40. 1. Ἀχολία ἐκλίσαι παντὶ ἀνθρώπῳ, &c.

* Job 5. 7.

† Vid. Max. Tyr. diff. 25. p. 244.

‡ It was the Doom of Man to eat his Bread in Sorrow all the Days of his Life. Gen. 3. 17.

|| Eccl. 1. 14. All is vanity and vexation of spirit.

*† Apoc. 21. 4.

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on, that the * Life of Man and Trouble are individual Companions, continually and closely sticking one to the other; that † Life and Misery are but several Names of the same thing; that our State here is nothing else, but a combination of various Evils (made up of Cares, of Labours, of Dangers, of Disappointments, of Discords, of Disquiets, of Diseases, of manifold Pains and Sorrows) that all Ages, from wailing Infancy to querulous Decrepitness, and all Conditions, from the careful Sceptre to the painful Spade, are fraught with many great Inconveniencies peculiar to each of them; ‡ that all the face of the Earth is overspread with Mischiefs as with a general and perpetual Deluge; that nothing perfectly sound, nothing safe, nothing stable, nothing serene is here to be found; this with one sad Voice all Mankind resoundeth; this our *Poets* are ever moanfully singing; this our *Philosophers* do gravely inculcate; this the Experience of all Times loudly proclaimeth; For what are all Histories but continual Registers of the Evils incident to Men? What do they

G 3

all

* 'Ο βίῳ ἀληθῶς ἢ βίῳ, ἢ καὶ συμφορᾷ.

Βίῳ γὰρ ὄντου ἔχει, πόνῳ δ' ἔργῳ πέλει. Eurip.

† *Quid est diu vivere, nisi diu torqueri?* Aug.

‡ Πλεῖν μὲν γὰρ γαῖα κακῶν, πλεῖν δὲ θάλασσα. Heliod.

all describe but Wars and Slaughters, Mutinies and Seditions, Tumults and Confusions, Devastations and Ruins? What do they tell us, but of Men furiously striving together, circumventing, spoiling, destroying one another? What do we daily hear reported, but cruel Broils, bloody Battels, and tragical Events; great numbers of Men slain, wounded, hurried into captivity; Cities sacked and rased, Countries harassed and depopulated; Kingdoms and Commonwealths overturned? What do we see before us but Men carking, toiling, bickering; some worn out with Labour, some pining away for Want, some groaning under Pain? And * amidst so many common Miseries and Misfortunes, in so generally confused and dismal a state of Things, is it not ridiculously absurd for us, doth it not argue in us a prodigious fondness of Self-love, heinously to resent, or impatiently to bemoan our particular and private Crosses? May not reasonably that Expostulation of *Jeremy* to *Baruch*, reach us? † *The Lord saith thus, Behold, that*
which

* *Ferre, quam sortem patiuntur omnes, Nemo recuset.* Sen. *Troad.*

Idè mibi videtur rerum natura, quod gravissimum fecit, commune fecisse, ut crudelitatem fati consolaretur aequalitas. Sen. *ad Polyb.* 21.

† *Jer.* 45. 4. 5.

which I have built, I will break down; and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land; And seekest thou great things for thy self? seek them not; for behold I will bring evil on all flesh.

2. Again, if we more closely and particularly survey the States of other Men (of our Brethren every where, of our Neighbours all about us) and compare our Case with theirs, our Condition hardly can appear to us so bad, but that we have many Consorts and Associates therein; many as ill, many far worse bestead than our selves. How many of our Brethren in the World may we observe conflicting with extreme Penury and Distress; How many undergoing continual hard Drudgeries to maintain their Lives; how many sorely pinched with Hunger and Cold; how many tortured with grievous Sickness; how many oppressed with Debt; how many shut up under close Restraint; how many detained in horrible Slavery; how many by the wasting rage of War rifled of their Goods, driven from their Homes, dispossessed of all comfortable Subsistence? How many, in fine, passing their Lives in all the Inconveniencies of rude, beggarly, sordid and savage Barbarism? And who of us have, in any measure, tasted of these, or of the like Calamities? Yet are these

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Sufferers, all of them, the same in Nature with us ; many of them (as Reason, as Humility, as Charity do oblige us to believe) deserve as well, divers of them much better than our selves: What Reason then can we have to conceive our Case so hard, or to complain thereof? Were we the only Persons exposed to Trouble, or the single marks of adverse Fortune ; could we truly say with the *Prophet*, * *Behold, if there be any sorrow like my sorrow*, we might seem a little unhappy ; but since we have so much good Company in our conceived Woe ; since it is so ordinary a thing to be poor and distressed ; since † *our Case is* (as the *Poet* speaketh) *not rare, but commonly known, trite, and drawn out from the heap of Lots, offered to Men by Fortune*: Since pitiful Objects do thus environ and enclose us ; 'tis plainly reasonable, human and just, that we should without murmuring take, and bear our Lot : For ‡ what Privilege have we to alledge, that we rather than others should be untouched by the Grievances, to which Mankind is obnox-

* Lam. i. 12.

† — *Nec rara videmus.*

Qua pateris; casus multis hic cognitus & jam Tritus, & è medio fortuna ductus acervo. Juv. Sat. 13.

v. 8.

‡ *Te nunc delicias extra communia censes Ponendum, &c.* Juv. Sat. 13. v. 140.

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obnoxious? Whence may we pretend to be the special Favourites, Minions, Privado's and Darlings of Fortune? Why may not God well deal with us, as he doth with other Men; what Grounds have we to challenge, or to expect, that he should be partial toward us; why should we imagine, that he must continually do Miracles in our behalf, causing all those Evils, which fall upon our Neighbours all about, to skip over us; bedewing us, like **Gideon's Fleece*, with Plenty and Joy, while all the Earth beside is dry; causing us, like the † *three Children*, to walk in this wide Furnace, unscorched and unsinged by the Flames encompassing us? Are we not Men framed of the same mold; are we not Sinners guilty of like Offences, with the meanest Peasant, the poorest Beggar, the most wretched Slave? if so, then a parity of Fortune with any Men doth become us, and may be due to us; then it is a perverse and unjust frowardness to be displeased with our Lot; we may, if we please, pity the common State of Men, but we cannot reasonably complain of our own; doing so plainly doth argue, that we do unmeasurably Overprize, and Overlove our selves. When once a *great King* did ex-

G 5

cessively

* Jud. 6. 37.

† Dan. 3. 25.

cessively and obstinately grieve for the Death of his Wife, whom he tenderly loved, a *Philosopher* observing it, told him, " That he was ready to comfort him by
 " restoring her to Life, supposing only,
 " that he would supply what was needful
 " toward the performing it; " The *King*
 " said, he was ready to furnish him with
 " any Thing; the *Philosopher* answer'd,
 " That he was provided with all Things
 " necessary, except one Thing: What
 " that was the *King* demanded; he repli-
 " ed, *That if he would upon his Wife's Tomb*
inscribe the Names of three Persons, who ne-
ver mourned, she presently would revive: The
King, after enquiry, told the *Philosopher*,
 That he could not find one such Man:
 * *Why then, O absurdest of all Men* (said
 the *Philosopher* smiling) *art thou not asha-*
med to moan as if thou hadst alone fallen into
so grievous a Case; when as thou canst not
find one Person, that ever was free from such
domestick Affliction? So might the naming
 one Person, exempted from Inconvenien-
 cies, like to those we undergo, be safely
 proposed to us as a certain Cure of ours;
 but if we find the Condition impossible,
 then

* Ἐτι δὲ πάντων ἀτοπώτατε θρῆνεις ἀναίδω, ὡς
 μόνος ἀλγεῖν ὧ τὸσάτω συμπλακεῖς, ὃ μηδὲ ἓνα τῶν
 πάποτε γεγονότων ἀμείρον οἰκέεις πάδες ἔχων εὐρεῖν.
 Jul. Ep. 38.

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then is the generality of the Case a sufficient ground of Content to us; then may we, as the wise *Poet* adviseth, * *Solace our own Evils by the Evils of others*, so frequent and obvious to us.

3. We are indeed very apt to look † upward toward those few, who, in supposed advantages of Life (in Wealth, Dignity, or Reputation) do seem to transcend, or to precede us, grudging and repining at their Fortune; but seldom do we cast ‡ down our Eyes on those innumerable many good People, who lie beneath us in all manner of Accommodations, pitying their mean or hard Condition; like Racers we look forward, and pursue those who go before us, but reflect not backward, or consider those who come behind us; two or three out-shining us in some slender piece of Prosperity, doth raise Dissatisfaction in us, while the doleful State of millions doth little affect us with any Regard or Compassion: || Hence so general Discontent springeth, hence so few are satisfied

* Παρηγόρει τὰ κακὰ δι' ἑτέρων κακῶν. Menand.

† Nulli ad aliena respicienti sua placent. Sen. de Ira. 3. 31.

‡ — Neque se majori pauperiorum

Turba comperet hunc atque hunc superare labores:

Ut cum carceribus, &c. Hor. Sat. 1.

|| Inde fit ut nemo, qui se vixisse beatum

Dicat, &c. Hor. Sat. 1.

tisfied with their Condition; an epidemical eye-sore molesting every Man; for § there is no Man, of whatsoever Condition, who is not in some desirable Things out-stripped by others; none is so high in Fortune, but another in Wit or Wisdom, in Health, or Strength, or Beauty, in Reputation or Esteem of Men, may seem to excel him; he therefore looking with an *evil* or envious *Eye* on such Persons, and with senseless Disregard passing over the rest of Men, * doth easily thereby lose his Ease and Satisfaction from his own Estate; whereas, if we would consider the Case of most Men, we should see abundant reason to be satisfied with our own; if we would a little feel the Calamities of our Neighbours, we should little resent our own Crosses; a kindly Commiseration of others more grievous Disasters would drown the sense of our lesser Disappointments.

If with any competent heedfulness we view Persons and Things before us, we shall easily discern, that what absolutely seemeth great and weighty, is indeed comparatively very small and light; that Things are not so unequally dispensed, but that we have

§ Si vis gratus esse adversus Deos, & amicus vitam tuam, cogita quàm multos antecesseris. Sen. Ep. 15.

* Nunquam erit felix, quem torquetur felicior. Sen. de Ira. 3. 31. Vid. Ib.

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have our full share in Good, and no more than our part in Evil; * that *Socrates* had reason to suppose, that, if we should bring into one common stock all our Mishaps, so that each should receive his Portion of them, gladly the most would take up their own, and go their Ways; that consequently it is both Iniquity and Folly in us to complain of our Lot.

4. If even we would take care diligently to compare our State with the State of those, † whom we are apt most to Admire and Envy, it would afford matter of Consolation and Content unto us. What is the State of the greatest Persons (of the World's *Princes* and *Grandees*) what, but a State encompassed with Snares and Temptations numberless; which without extreme Caution and Constancy, force of Reason, and command of all Appetites and Passions cannot be avoided, and seldom are? What, but a state of pompous Trouble, and gay Servility, of living in continual noise and stir, environed with Crouds and Throngs, of being subject to the urgency of

* Εἰ συνερέγκαιμεν εἰς τὸ κοινὸν τὰς ἀτυχίας, ὥστε διελέσθαι τὸ ἴσον ἕκαστον, ἀσμένως ἂν τὸς πλείους τὰς αὐτῶν λαβούσας ἀπελθεῖν. *Plut. Apoll.*

That at worst we are *Extremi primorum, extremis usq;* *prioribus.* *Hor. Epist. 2. 2.*

† *Magna servitius est magna fortuna, &c.* *Sen. ad Polyb. 26.*

of Business, and the tediousness of Ceremony; of being abused by perfidious Servants, and mocked by vile Flatterers; of being exposed to common Censure and Obloquy, to Misrepresentation, Misconstruction and Slander; having the Eyes of all Men intent upon their Actions, and as many severe Judges as watchful Spectators of them; of being accountable for many Mens Faults, and bearing the blame of all Miscarriages about them; of being responsible, in Conscience, for the Miscarriages and Mishaps which come from the influence of their Counsels, their Examples, &c. of being pester'd and pursu'd with Pretences, with Suits, with Complaints, the necessary result whereof is to displease or provoke very many, to oblige or satisfy very few; of being frequently engaged in Resentments of Ingratitude, of Treachery, of Neglects, of Defects in Duty, and breaches of Trust toward them; of being constrained to comply with the Humours and Opinions of Men; of anxious Care to keep, and jealous Fear of losing all; of Danger, and being objected to the traiterous Attempts of bold Malecontents, of fierce Zealots and wild Fanaticks; of wanting the most solid and favourable Comforts of Life, true Friendship, free Conversation, certain Leisure, Privacy,

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cy, and Retiredness, for enjoying themselves, their Time, their Thoughts as they think good; of Satiety, and being cloyed with all sorts of Enjoyments: In fine, of being paid with false Coin for all their Cares and Pains, receiving for them scarce any thing more but * empty shews of Respect, and hollow acclamations of Praise; (whence the *Psalmist* might well say, † *Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree a lye*; a Lye, for that their State cheateth us, appearing so specious, yet being really so inconvenient and troublesome.) Such is the State of the greatest Men; such as hath made ‡ wise Princes weary of themselves, ready to acknowledge, that if Men knew the weight of a Crown, none would take it up; apt to think with Pope || *Adrian*, who made this *Epitaph* for himself; *Here lieth Adrian the Sixth, who thought nothing in his Life to have befallen*

* *Personata felicitas.* Sen. Ep. 80.

† *Psal.* 62. 9.

— *Adulandi certamen est, & unum omnium amicorum officium, una contentio quis blandissimè fallat.* Sen. de Benef. 6. 30.

Vid. optimè differentem. Vid. *Ec.* de Clem. 1. 19. Et ad Polyb. 26.

‡ *Antigonus.* *Nescitis amici, quid mali sit imperare, &c.* Saturninus apud Vopiscum.

|| *Hic situs est Adrianus VI. qui nihil sibi in vitâ infelicius duxit, quàm quod imperavit.* Lud. Guicciard. P. Jovius in vit.

len him more unhappy, than that he Ruled: Such, in fine, their State, as upon due consideration we should, were it offered to our Choice, never embrace; such, indeed, as in sober Judgment, we cannot prefer before the most narrow and inferior Fortune: How then can we reasonably be displeased with our Condition, when we may even pity § *Emperors* and *Kings*, when, in reality, we are as well, perhaps are much better than they?

5. Farther, it may induce, and ingage us to be Content, to consider what commonly hath been the Lot of good Men in the World: we shall, if we survey the Histories of all Times, find the * best Men to have sustained most grievous Crosses and Troubles; scarce is there in † Ho-
ly

§ *Nihil difficilius quàm bene imperare.* Dioclet. apud Vo-
pii. in Aureliano.

* Consider what Calamities great, powerful, glorious Men have endured; *Cræsus*, *Polycrates*, *Pompey*, &c. Sen.
de Ira. 3. 25.

Οἱ καὶ Ἑλλήων ἀεῖσοι πένιαν διέζων παρὰ πάν-
τα † εἶοι. (*Aristides*, *Phocion*, *Epaminondas*, *Pelopi-
das*) *Æl.* xi. 9. 11. 43. *Lamachus*, *Ephialtes*, *Socrates*,
Cato, *Regulus*, *Phocion*, &c.

Magnum exemplum nisi mala fortuna non invenit.

† *Abel*, *Noe*, &c. *Chryl.* Tom. 6. p. 107.

Νῦν καὶ πάσαι ἐξ ἑ. γεγονάσιν ἀνδρωποὶ ἀπαντες
οἱ τῷ θεῷ φίλοι τῷ συγγνώ καὶ ἐπιμόχθω καὶ μυρίων
γῆμόντι δεινῶς ἐκληρώθησαν εἶα. *Chryl.* in *Mart.*
Ægypt. T. 5. 522.

Ερ

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ly Scripture recorded any Person eminent and illustrious for Goodness, who hath not tasted deeply of Wants and Distresses. *Abraham, the Father of the Faithful*, and especial Friend of God, was called out of his Country, and from his Kindred, to wander in a strange Land, and lodge in Tents, without any fixed Habitation. *Jacob* spent a great part of his Life in slavish Toil, and in his old Age was in reflexion upon his Life moved to say, that * *the days of his pilgrimage had been few and evil*. *Joseph* was maligned and persecuted by his Brethren, sold away for a Slave, slandered for a most heinous Crime, thrust into a grievous Prison, where † *his feet were hurt with fetters, and his soul came into iron*. *Moses* was forced to fly away for his Life, to become a Vagabond in a foreign Place, to feed Sheep for his livelihood; to spend afterward the best of his Life in contesting with an obstinately perverse Prince, and

Ἐν τοῖς περυσμοῖς ὡδὲν οἱ δίκαιοι, τὰς ἀγίας
ἀπαντας ἕως ἡγάγεν ὁ θεὸς διὰ θλίψεως, Chrys.
in 2 Cor. Orat. 27.

Ἐκ γὰρ τοῦ πρώτου φώτων ἀνθρώπων μέχρι τῆ πα-
ρόντος καιρῷ τὰς τῶ ὅλων ἐσπεδακότητας σέβειν θεόν
ὅτιν ἑυρεῖν ὡρᾷ τῇ συμβεβιωκότων ἀνθρώπων ἡδι-
κημένους, καὶ πλείοις ἄγαν πεπρωκότητας ἀνι-
στῆς. Theod. Ep. 132.

* Gen. 47. 9. † Psal. 105. 18.

Σίδνεον δὴλθεν ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτῆς.

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and in leading a mistrustful, mutinous, refractory People, for forty Years Time, thro' a vast and wild Defart. *Job*, * what a stupendous heap of Mischiefs did together fall, and lie heavy upon him? (*† Thou writest bitter things against me*, he might well say.) *David*, How often was he plunged in saddest Extremity, and reduced to the hardest Shifts; being *‡ hunted like a partridge in the wilderness* by an envious Master, forced to counterfeit Madnes for his Security among barbarous Infidels; dispossessed of his Kingdom, and persecuted by his own most favoured Son; deserted by his Servants, reproached and scorned by his Subjects. *Elias* was driven long to sculk for his Life, and to shift for his Livelihood in the Wilderness. *Jeremy* was treated as an Impostor and a Traitor, and cast into a miry Dungeon; finding matter from his Sufferings for his doleful Lamentations, and having thence occasion to exclaim, *|| I am the man that have seen affliction by the rod of his wrath, &c.* § Which of the prophets were not persecuted, and misused? as *St. Stephen* asked. The **† Apostles* were pinched with all kinds of Want, harrassed with all

* Vid. Chrys. Tom. 5. Orat. 27. p. 168 & Tom. 6. Or. 10. p. 107.

† Job 13. 27. ‡ 1 Sam. 26. 20. || Lam. 3. 1.

§ Acts 7. 52. *† 1 Cor. 4. & 7.

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all sorts of Toil, exposed to all manner of Hazards, persecuted with all variety of Contumelies, and Pains that can be imagined: Above all, * our Lord himself beyond expression was *a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief*, surpassing all Men in Suffering as he did excell them in Dignity, and in Virtue; extreme Poverty, † *having not so much as where to lay his head*, was his Portion; to undergo continual Labour and Travel, without any mixture of carnal Ease or Pleasure, was his State; in return for the highest good Will, and choicest Benefits, to receive most cruel Hatred, and grievous Injuries, to be loaded with the bitterest Reproaches, the foulest Slanders, the sorest Pains, which most spiteful Malice could invent, or fiercest Rage inflict, this was his Lot: *Am I poor?* so may one say, was he to extremity; *am I slighted of the World?* so was he notoriously; *Am I disappointed and crossed in my Designs?* so was he continually, all his most painful Endeavours having small effect; *Am I deserted or betrayed of Friends?* so was he by those who were most intimate, and most obliged to him; *Am I reviled, slandered, misused?* Was not he so beyond all comparison most outragiously? Have

* Chryf. Tom. 6. Or. 93. Isa. 53. 3.

† Matt. 8. 20.

Have all these, and many more, of * *whom the World was not worthy*, undergone all sorts of inconvenience, being *destitute, afflicted, tormented*; and shall we then disdain, or be sorry to be found in such company? † *Having such a cloud of Martyrs, let us run with patience the race that is set before us.* Is it not an Honour, should it not be a comfort to us, that we do, in condition, resemble them? If God hath thus dealt with those, who of all Men have been dearest to him, shall we take it ill at his hands, that he, in any manner, dealeth so with us? Can we pretend, can we hope, can we even wish to be used better, than God's first-born, and our Lord himself hath been? If we do, are we not monstrously fond and arrogant? especially considering, that it is not only an ordinary Fortune, but the peculiar Character of God's chosen, and Children, to be often crossed, checked and corrected: Even *Pagans* have observed it, and avowed there is great reason for it; ‡ *God (saith Seneca) hath a fatherly mind toward good Men; and strongly loveth them — therefore after the manner of severe Parents, he educateth them hardly, &c.* The *Apostle* doth

* Heb. 11. 38. † Heb. 12. 1.

‡ Sen. de Provid. c. 2.

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doth in exprefs terms assure us thereof ; for, * *whom* (saith he) *the Lord loveth, he chastneth, and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth.* If ye endure chastning, God deal-eth with you as with Sons — but if ye be without chastisement, whereof all (that is, all good Men, and genuine Sons of God) are partakers, then are ye Bastards, and not Sons. Would we be illegitimated, or expunged from the number of God's true Children ; would we be divested of his special regard and good-will ? if not, † Why do we not gladly embrace, and willingly sustain Adversity, which is by himself declared so peculiar a Badge of his Children, so constant a Mark of his Favour ? If all good Men do (as the *Apostle* asserteth) *partake thereof* ; shall we, by displeasure at it, shew, that we desire to be assuredly none of that Party, that we affect to be discarded from that holy and happy Society ? ‡ *Verily, verily I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the World shall rejoyce.* It is peculiarly the Lot of Christians, as such, in conformity to their afflicted Saviour ; they are here-

* Heb. 12. 6, 7, 8.

† Eccus. 2. 1. Τέκνον, εἰ περιστέρις ὁ δαλύνειν κυεῖα, ἐτόίμασον τὴν ψυχὴν σου εἰς πειρασμόν.

‡ Joh. 16. 20.

herein * *Predestinated to be conformable to his Image; to this they are appointed.* († *Let no Man, saith St. Paul, be moved by these Afflictions, for ye know, that we are appointed thereunto:*) to this they are called (‡ *if when ye do well, saith St. Peter, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God; for even hereunto were ye called*) this is propounded to them as a condition to be undertaken, and undergone by them as such; they are by Profession *crucigeri*, bearers of the cross; (|| *If any one will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me; § Every one that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer Persecution*) by this are they admitted into the State of Christians; (*† *by many Afflictions we must enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*) this doth qualifie them for enjoying the glorious Rewards, which their Religion propoundeth; (§|| *We are coheirs with Christ, so that, if we suffer*
together

* Rom. 8. 29. † 1 Thes. 3. 3. Phil. 3. 10.
‡ 1 Pet. 2. 20, 21. || Matt. 16. 24. 10. 38.
§ 2 Tim. 3. 12.

John 16. 33. Ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ θλίψιν ἔχετε.

Quotam partem angustiarum perpeffus sum qui cruci milito? Hier. ad Afellam, Ep. 99.

*† Act. 14. 22. Vid. Greg. Naz. Ep. 201. ad Theclam.

§|| 2 Tim. 2. 12. (Phil. 3. 10.)

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together, we shall also together be glorified with him; If we endure, we shall also reign with him; * And shall we then pretend to be Christians, shall we claim any Benefit from thence, if we are unwilling to submit to the Law, to attend the Call, to comply with the Terms thereof? Will we enjoy its Privileges, can we hope for its Rewards, if we will not contentedly undergoe what it requireth? Shall we arrive to the end it propoundeth, without going in the way it prescribeth, the way which our Lord himself doth lead us in, and himself hath trod before us?

In fine, seeing Adversity is, as hath been declared, a Thing so Natural to all Men, so common to most Men, so incident to Great Men, so proper to Good Men, so peculiar to Christians, we have great Reason to observe the Apostles Advice; † Beloved, wonder not concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as if some strange thing happened to you; we

* It is a Privilege of Christians, in Favour bestowed on them; ὑμῖν ἐχαρίσθη. Phil. 1. 29.

Our Glory. Eph. 3. 13. ὑπομονὴς ἔχετε χάριαν. Heb. 10. 36.

Faith and Patience are Consorts, Heb. 6. 12. Apoc. 13. 10.

† 1 Pet. 4. 12.

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we should not wonder at it as a strange or uncouth thing, that we are engaged in any Trouble or Inconvenience here; we are consequently not to be affected with it as a Thing very Grievous.

OF

O F

CONTENTMENT.

The Fifth SERMON.

PHIL. IV. 11.

I have learned in whatsoever State I am, therewith to be content.

MOREOVER, considering the
 * Nature of this Duty it self,
 may be a great inducement and
 aid to the Practice of it.

1. It is it self a fovereign Remedy for
 all Poverty and all Sufferance ; removing
 them, or allaying all the Mischief they
 can do us. It is well and truly said by
 St. *Austin*, † *Interest non qualia, sed qua-*
lis quis patiatur ; It is no matter what, but
 H how

* 1 Tim. 6. 6. Ἐστὶ ὃ μέγας πορισμὸς ἡ ἐνσέβεια
 αὐταρκείας.

† Aug. de Civ. Dei. 1. 8.

how disposed a Man suffereth : The chief mischief any Adversity can do us is to render us discontent, in that consisteth all the Sting, and all the Venom thereof; which thereby being voided, Adversity can signify nothing prejudicial or noxious to us; all Distraction, all Distemper, all Disturbance from it is by the Antidote of Contentedness prevented or corrected. He that hath his Desires moderated to a Temper suitable with his Condition, that hath his Passions composed and settled agreeably to his Circumstances, what can make any grievous Impression on him, or render him any-wise miserable? He that taketh himself to have enough, what doth he need? he that is well-pleased to be as he is, how can he be better? what can the largest Wealth, or highest Prosperity in the World yield more, or better, than * satisfaction of Mind? he that hath this most essential Ingredient of Felicity, is he not thence in effect most Fortunate? is not at least his Condition as good as that of the most Prosperous?

2. As good, do I say? yea is it not plainly much better, than can arise merely from
any

* *Cui cum paupertate bene convenit, dives est. Sen. Ep. 2. Nemo aliorum sensu miser est, sed suo; & ideo non possunt cujusquam falso judicio esse miseri, qui sunt verè conscientia sua beati. Nulli beatiore sunt, quàm qui hoc sunt quod volunt. Salv. de Gubern. Dei, 1.*

any secular Prosperity? for * Satisfaction springing from rational Consideration, and virtuous Disposition of Mind, is indeed far more precious, more noble and worthy, more solid and durable, more sweet and delectable, than that which any possession, or fruition of worldly Goods can afford: The † τὸ ἀφθαρτον τῆς πραΐας, καὶ ἡσυχίης πνεύματος, *incorruptibility* (as St. Peter speaketh) of a meek and quiet Spirit is before God of great Price; before God, that is, according to the most upright and certain Judgment it is the most precious and valuable thing in the World: ‡ There is (the Philosopher could say) no Spectacle more worthy of God (or grateful to him) than a good Man Gallantly Combating with ill Fortune. Not to be discomposed or distempered in Mind, not to fret or whine, when all

H 2

things

* Οὐ γὰρ τὸ ποιῆσαι τι χρηστὸν μόνον, ἀλλὰ τὸ παθεῖν τι κακὸν πολλὰς ἔχει τὰς ἀμοιβὰς καὶ μεγάλα τὰ ἔπαθλα, &c. Chrys. ad Olymp. Ep. 3. Vid. p. 73.

Οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ ὑπομονῆς εἰς εὐδοκμησέως λόγον ἴσον ἢ γὰρ βασιλεὺς ἢ ἀγαθὸν, καὶ ἢ σφετέρων ἢ κορωνὶς αὐτῇ μάχῃ ἐστὶ. Chrys. ad Olymp. Ep. 16. Vid. Epist. 6. & ad Olymp. Ep. 3. (p. 75.) de Josepho.

† 1 Pet. 3. 4.

‡ Ecce pater Deo dignum vir bonus cum mala fortuna compositus. Sen. de Provid

things flow prosperously and according to our Mind, is no great Praise, no sign of Wisdom or Argument of Goodness; it cannot be reckoned an effect of sound Judgment, or virtuous Affection, but a natural consequent of such a State: But when there are evident occasions, and urgent temptations to Displeasure, when present Sense and Fancy do prompt and provoke to Murmuring, then to be satisfied in our Mind, then to keep our Passions in order, then to maintain good Humour, then to restrain our Tongue from Complaint, and to govern our Demeanour sweetly, this is indeed honourable and handsome; to see a worthy Man sustain Crosses, Wants, Disgraces with equanimity and chearfulness is a most goodly Sight; such a Person to a judicious Mind appeareth in a far more honourable and invidious State, than any prosperous Man; his Virtue shining in the dark is far more bright and fair: * *this* (as St. Peter saith, in a like case) *is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God suffereth grief; if, in our Case* (we may say after him) *a Man out of conscientious Deference to God's Will, doth contentedly undergo Adversity, this God is ready to*
take

* 1 Pet. 2. 19.

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take for an Obligation on himself, † and will be disposed, in a manner, to *thank him* (or to reward him) for it: this indeed amounteth to a Demonstration that such a Person is truly wise and really good; so is the Satisfaction of a contented poor Man more worthy: And it is no less more sweet and comfortable, than that of any rich Man, pleasing himself in his Enjoyments; Contentedness satisfieth the Mind of the one, Abundance doth only satiate the Appetites of the other; the former is immaterial and sprightly, the complacency of a Man; the latter is gross and dull, like the sensuality of a Beast; the delight of that sinketh deep into the Heart, the pleasure of this doth only float in the outward Senses, or in the Fancy; one is a positive Comfort, the other but a negative Indolency in regard to the Mind: The poor good Man's Joy is wholly his own, and home-born, a lovely Child of Reason and Virtue; the full rich Man's Pleasure cometh from without, and is thrust into him by impulses of sensible Objects.

H 3

Hence

† *Honestā res est lata paupertas.* Epic.

Οὐδὲ γὰρ ὁ διὰ † θεῶν τι πάχων μόνον εὐδοκίμει,
ἀλλὰ καὶ ὁ ἀδικῶς τι πάχων, καὶ φέρων θλοναίως καὶ
εὐχαιρῶν πῶς συγχωρεῖν θεῶ ἐκ ἐλάττων τῷ διὰ
† θεῶν ταῦτα πάχοντός ἐστιν. Chryst. ἀνδρ. 5'.

Hence is the satisfaction of contented Adversity far more constant, solid, and durable, than that of Prosperity; it being the product of immutable Reason, abideth in the Mind, and cannot easily be driven thence by any corporeal Impressions, which immediately cannot touch the Mind; whereas the other, issuing from Sense, is subject to all the Changes, inducible from the restless Commotions of outward Causes affecting and altering Sense; whence the satisfaction proceeding from Reason and Virtue, the longer it stayeth the firmer and sweeter it groweth, turning into Habit, and working Nature to an agreement with it; whereas usually the Joys of Wealth and Prosperity do soon degenerate into Fastidiousness, and terminate in Bitterness; being * *honey in the mouth*, but soon becoming *gall in the bowels*. Nothing indeed can affect the Mind with a truer Pleasure, than the very Conscience of discharging our Duty toward God in bearing hardship, imposed by his Providence, willingly and well. We have therefore much reason not only to acquiesce in our Straits, but to be glad of them, seeing they do yield us an opportunity of immediately obtaining Goods more excellent and

* Apoc. 10. 10. Job 20. 20, 22.

and more desirable, than any prosperous or wealthy Man can easily have; since they furnish us with means of acquiring and exercising a Virtue worth the most ample Fortune, yea justly preferable to the best Estate in the World; a Virtue, which indeed doth not only render any Condition tolerable, but sweetneth any thing, yea sanctifieth all States, and turneth all Occurrences into Blessings.

3. Even the sensible smart of Adversity is by Contentedness somewhat tempered and eased; the stiller and quieter we lie under it, the less we feel its violence and pungency: It is tumbling and tossing that stirreth the ill Humours, and driveth them to the Parts most weak, and apt to be affected with them; the rubbing of our Sores is that which enflameth and exasperateth them: where the Mind is calm, and the Passions settled, the Pain of any Grievance is in comparison less acute, less sensible.

4. Whence if others in our Distress are uncharitable to us, refusing the Help they might, or should afford toward the rescuing us from it, or relieving us in it, we hereby may be Charitable and great Benefactors to our selves; we should need no *Anodyne* to be ministred from without, no Succour to come from any Creature, if

we would not be wanting to our selves, in hearkning to our own Reason, and enjoying the Consolation which it affordeth. In not doing this, we are more Uncharitable and Cruel to our selves, than any spiteful Enemy, or treacherous Friend can be; no Man can so wrong or molest us, as we do our selves, by admitting and fostering Discontent.

5. The contented bearing of our Condition is also the most hopeful and ready Means of bettering it, and of removing the Pressures we lie under.

It is partly so in a natural Way, as disposing us to embrace and employ the Advantages which occur conducive thereto. For as Discontent blindeth Men so that they cannot descry the ways of escape from Evil; dispiriteth and discourageth them from endeavouring to help themselves, depriveth them of many Succours and Expedients, which Occasion would afford for their Relief; so he that being undisturbed in his Spirit hath his Eyes open, and his Courage up, and all his natural Powers in order, will be always ready and able to do his best, to act vigorously, to snatch any Opportunity and employ any Means toward the freeing himself from what appeareth Grievous to him.

Upon

Upon a supernatural account Content is yet more efficacious to the same purpose; for chearful Submission to God's Will doth please him much, doth strongly move him to withdraw his afflicting Hand, doth effectually induce him to advance us into a more comfortable State: Of all Virtues there is none more acceptable to God than Patience. God will take it well at our Hands, if we do contentedly receive from his Hand the worst Things. 'Tis a monstrous thing not to receive Prosperity with grateful Sense, but it is heroical with the same Mind to receive Things unpleasant: he that doth so * *ζημιεῖται μὲν ὡς ἄνθρωπος, σεφανεται ὅς ὡς φιλόθεος*, *he suffereth loss as a man, but is crowned as a lover of God.* Besides that it is an † unreasonable thing to think of enjoying both Rest and Pleasure here, and the Rewards hereafter; our Consolation here with *Dives*, and our Refreshment hereafter with *Lazarus*.

‡ *Be humbled* (saith St. Peter) *under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time* (ἐν καιρῷ, when it is opportune and seasonable) and, || *Be humbled* (saith St. James) *before the Lord, and he will ex-*

H 5 alt

* Chrys. Tom. 6. Or. 89.

† Vid. Chrys. ad Stag. 1. & 2. p. 106.

‡ 1 Pet. 5. 6. || Jam. 4. 10.

alt you, and, § *When* (said Job's Friends) *men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up, and he will save the humble person.* God with favourable pity hearkeneth to the Groans of them who are *hum- bly contrite* under his Hand, and reverent- ly * *tremble at his word*; he *reviveth the spirit of the humble*; He † *is nigh to the broken of heart, and saveth such as are of a contrite spirit*; He *healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds*; He proclaim- eth ‡ *blessedness to the poor in spirit, and to those that mourn*, because they shall find Comfort and Mercy; all which Declara- tions and Promises are made concerning those, who bear Adversity with a submissive and contented Mind; and we see them ef- fectually performed in the Cases of *Ahab*, of the *Ninivites*, of *Nebuchadnezzar*, of *Ma- nasses*, of *Hezekiah*, of *David*; of all Per- sons mentioned in *Holy Scripture*, upon whom Adversities had such kindly Opera- tions. But Discontent and Impatience do offend God, and provoke him to continue his Judgments, yea to increase the load of them: To be Sullen and Stubborn is the sure way to render our Condition worse, and

§ Job 22. 29. (Luke 14. 11. 18. 14.)

* Isa. 66. 2. 57. 15.

† Psal. 34. 18. 51. 17. 147. 3. ‡ Matt. 5. 3. 4.

and more intolerable; for, || *who hath hardened himself against God and prospered?* The *Pharaohs* and *Sauls*, and such like Persons, who rather would § break than bend, who being dissatisfied with their own Condition, chose rather to lay hold on other imaginary Succours, than to have recourse to God's Mercy and Help; those, who (like the *Refractory Israelites*) have been *smit-ten in vain* as to any quiet Submission or Conversion unto God, what have they but plunged themselves deeper into Wretchedness?

It is indeed to quell our haughty Stomach, to check our froward Humour, to curb our impetuous Desires, to calm our disorderly Passions, to suppress our fond Admiration and eager Affection toward these worldly Things; in short, to work a contented Mind in us, that God ever doth inflict any Hardships on us, that he crosseth us in our Projects, that he detaineth us in any troublesome State; until this be atchieved, as it is not expedient that we should be Eased, as Relief would really be no Blessing to us; so God (except in Anger and Judgment) will no-wise grant or dispense it; it would be a cruel Mercy for him to do it: If therefore we do wish
ever

|| Job 9. 4. § Jer. 2. 30. 5. 3. Isa. 2. 13. 1. 5. 26. 10.

ever to be in a good Case as to this World, let us learn to be contented in a Bad one: Having got this Disposition firmly rooted in our Hearts, we are qualified for Deliverance and Preferment; nor will God fail in that due Season to perform for us what he so often hath declared and promised; his Nature disposeth him, his Word hath engaged him to Help and Comfort us.

These are the most proper Inducements unto Contentedness, which considering (in the Light of Reason and *Holy Scripture*) the Nature of the Thing, suggested unto my Meditation: there are beside some other Means advisable, (some general, some more particular) which are very conducive to the production of Content, or removing Discontent; which I shall touch, and then conclude.

1. A constant Endeavour to live well, and to maintain a good Conscience: he that doth this can hardly be dismay'd or disturb'd with any Occurrence here; this will yield a Man so ample and firm a Satisfaction of Mind, as will bear down the sense of any incumbent Evils; this will beget such Hope in God, and so good assurance of his Favour, as will supply the want of all other Things, and fully satisfy us, that we have no cause to be troubled with

with any thing here: He that by conscientious Practice hath obtained such a Hope, is prepared against all assaults of Fortune, with an undaunted Mind, and Force impregnable; * *He will (as the Psalmist saith) not be afraid of any evil tidings, for his heart is fixed trusting in the Lord.* Maintaining this will free us from all anxious Care, transferring it upon God; it will breed a sure Confidence, that he will ever be ready to supply us with all Things convenient, to protect and deliver us from all Things hurtful; ensuring to us the effect of that Promise, by the conscience of having performed the Condition thereof: † *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

This was that which supported the *Apostles*, and kept them chearful under all that heavy load of Distresses which lay upon them: ‡ *Our rejoicing is this (could they say) the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity — we have had our conversation in this World.*

'Tis the want of this best Pleasure, that both rendreth the absence of all other Pleasures grievous, and their presence insipid:

* Psal. 112. 1. 119. 6. † Matt. 6. 33.

‡ 1 Cor. 1. 12. 1 Pet. 3. 16. Acts 23. 1. 24. 16.

pid: Had we a good Conscience we could not seem to want Comfort; as we could not truly be Unhappy, so we could hardly be Discontent; without it no Affluence of other Things can suffice to content us. It is an evil Conscience that giveth an edge to all other Evils, and enableth them sorely to afflict us, which otherwise would but slightly touch us; we become thence incapable of Comfort, seeing not only Things here upon Earth to cross us, but Heaven to lowre upon us; finding no visible Succour, and having no Hope from the Power invisible; yea having reason to be discouraged with the fear of God's Displeasure. As he that hath a powerful Enemy near, cannot abide in Peace, without anxious Suspicion and Fear; so he that is at Variance with the Almighty, who is ever at hand, ready to cross and punish him, what quiet of Mind can he enjoy? *There is no peace to the wicked.*

2. The Contemplation of our * future State is a sovereign Medicine to work Contentedness, and to cure Discontent; as Discontent easily doth seise upon, and cleaveth fast to Souls, which earnestly do pore and dote upon these present Things, which have in them nothing satisfactory or stable; so
if

* 1 Theff. 4. 13. *Vid. Naz. Ep. 201. ad Theclam.*

if we can raise our Minds firmly to believe, seriously to consider, and worthily to prize the future State and its Concernments, we can hardly ever be Discontent in regard to these Things. Considering Heaven and its Happiness, how low and mean, how sordid and vile, how unworthy of our Care and our Affection will these inferior Things appear? How very * unconcerned shall we see our selves to be in them, and how easily thence shall we be content to want them? What (shall any of us be then ready to say) doth it concern me in what Rank or Garb I pass my few Days here? What considerable Interest can I have in this uncertain and transitory State? What is any Loss, any Disgrace, any Cross in this World to me, who am a Citizen of Heaven, who have a capacity and hope of the immense Riches, the incorruptible Glories, the perfect and endless Joys of Eternity? This was that which sustained the holy *Apostles* in all their Distresses; † *For this cause* (saith St. Paul) *we faint not* — *while we look not on the things which are seen, but on the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal*; and, ‡ *I reckon* (saith he

* 1 Cor. 7. 31. † 2 Cor. 4. 16. &c. 5. 7. ‡ Rom. 8. 18.

he again) *that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

If likewise we do with Faith and Seriousness consider the dismal State below of those, who are eternally secluded from all Joy and Bliss, who are irrecoverably condemned to utter Darkness, and the extremity of horrible Pain, how tolerable, how pleasant, how very happy will the meanest State here appear to be? How vain a thing will it then seem to us to dislike, or to be troubled with any worldly Thing, to account any Chance happening to us to be sad or disastrous? What (shall we say then each of us) is this same Loss to the loss of my Soul and all its Comforts for ever? What is this want to the perpetual want of heavenly Bliss? What is this short and faint Pain to the cruel pangs of endless Remorse, to the *weeping and gnashing of teeth in outward darkness, to everlasting burnings?*

Thus infinitely silly and petty must all Concernments of this Life appear to him, who is possessed with the belief and consideration of Matters relating to the future State; whence Discontent in regard to them can hardly find access to his Mind.

3. Constant Devotion is an excellent Instrument and Guard of Content, an excellent

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cellent Remedy and Fence against Discontent.

It is such in way of Impetration, procuring the removal, or alleviation of our Crosses: for God hath promised that * *he will give good things to those that ask him; The Lord is nigh unto all that call upon him in Truth; he will fulfill the desire of them that fear him; he also will hear their cry, and will save them. The poor Man crieth, and the Lord heareth him, and saveth him out of all his troubles; the Holy Scripture is full of such Declarations and Promises, assuring us of Succour from our Distresses, upon our Supplication to God; whence St. Paul thus adviseth against all solicitude: † Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by Prayer, and Supplication, with Thanksgiving, let your Requests be made known to God: And (addeth, signifying the consequence of this Practice) the peace of God, which passeth all Understanding, shall keep your Hearts and Minds through Jesus Christ.*

It likewise performeth the same by procuring Grace and Aid from God, which may enable and dispose us to bear all Evils well, which is really much better than a
removal

* Matt. 7. 11. Psal. 145. 18. Jam. 4. 8. Psal. 34. 6. 107. 6.

† Phil. 4. 7. (Psal. 25. 16. 86. 1, 4, 17. 44. 23.)

removal of them ; for that hence they become wholsome and profitable to us, and Causes of present Good, and Grounds of future Reward ; thus when St. *Paul* * *besought God* for Deliverance from his Thorn in the Flesh, the return to him was ; † *My Grace is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness* : It was a greater favour to receive an improvement of spiritual Strength, occasioned by that Cross, than to be quite freed from it.

Devotion also hath immediately of it self a special efficacy to produce Content. As in any Distress it is a great Consolation, that we can have recourse to a good Friend, that we may discharge our Cares and our Resentments into his Bosom ; that we may demand Advice from him, and, if need be, request his Succour ; so much more it must be a great Comfort, that we can in our need approach to God, who is infinitely the most faithful, the most affectionate, the most sufficient Friend that can be ; always most ready, most willing, most able to direct and to relieve us : He desires and delights, that ‡ *in the day of*
our

* 2 Cor. 12. 9. † 1 Cor. 10. 13.

‡ Psal. 77. 2. 27. 8. 105. 4. 62. 8. 1 Sam. 1. 15. Psal. 55. 22. 1 Pet. 5. 7. Psal. 5. 8. 27. 11. 31. 3. 43. 3. 139. 24. 143. 10. 61. 2. Jer. 31. 9.

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our trouble we should seek him ; that we should pour forth our hearts before him, that we should cast our burthens, and our cares upon him ; that we should upon all occasions implore his guidance and aid : And complying with his Desires as we shall assuredly find a successful Event of our Devotions, so we shall immediately enjoy great comfort and pleasure in them.

The God of all Consolation doth especially by this Chancel convey his Comforts into our Hearts ; his very Presence (that Presence, in which the Psalmist saith * *there is fulness of joy*) doth mightily warm and chear us ; his Holy Spirit doth in our religious intercourse with him insinuate a lightsome Serenity of Mind, doth kindle sweet and kindly Affections, doth scatter the gloomy Clouds of Sadness ; practising it we shall be able to say with the Psalmist, † *In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my Soul.*

Humbly addressing our selves to God, and reverently conversing with him, doth compose our Minds, and charm our Passions, doth sweeten our Humour, doth refresh and raise our Spirits, and so doth immediately breed and nourish Contentedness.

It

* Psal. 16. 11. † Psal. 94. 19.

It also strengthneth our Faith, and quickneth our Hope in God, * whereby we are enabled to support our present Evils, and peace of Mind doth spring up within us.

It enflameth our love unto God, || in sense of his gracious Illapses, thence rendering us willing to endure any want or pain for his Sake, or at his Appointment.

It in fine doth minister a ravishing Delight, abundantly able to supply the defect of any other Pleasures, and to allay the Smart of any Pains whatever; rendering thereby the meanest Estate more acceptable and pleasant, than any Prosperity without it can be. So that if we be truly Devout, we can hardly be Discontent; It is discomfiting from God by a neglect of Devotion, or by a negligence therein, that doth expose us to the Incurfions of worldly Regret and Sorrow.

These are general Remedies and Duties both in this and all other Regards necessary, the which yet we may be induced to perform in Contemplation of this happy Fruit (Contentedness) arising from them. Farther

4. It

* Isa. 26. 3. || Psal. 73. 26. 69. 16. 23. 4. 71. 20.

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4. It serveth toward production of Contentedness to reflect much upon our Imperfection, Unworthiness and Guilt ; so as thereby to work in our Hearts a lively Sense of them, and a hearty Sorrow for them ; this will divert our Sadness into its right Channel, this will drown our lesser Grief by the Influx of a greater. It is the Nature of a greater Apprehension or Pain incumbent, to extinguish in a manner and swallow up the Sense of a lesser, although in it self grievous ; as he that is under a Fit of the Stone doth scarce feel a Pang of the Gout ; he that is assaulted by a Wolf will not regard the biting of a Flea. Whereas then of all Evils and Mischiefs, moral Evils are incomparably far the greatest, in Nature the most ugly and abominable, in consequence the most hurtful and horrible : Seeing (in St. Chrysostom's Language)

** Excepting Sin, there is nothing grievous or terrible among human Things ; not Poverty, not Sickness, not Disgrace, not that which seemeth the most extreme of all Evils, Death it self ; those being Names only among*

* Οὐδὲν δεινὸν τῷ ἀνθρώπινον, ἀλλ' ἡ ἀμαρτία μόνη· ἡ πένια, ἡ νόσος, ἡ χρεὶς, ἡ ἐπὶ πείρα, ἡ ἀτιμία, &c.

Chryl. ἀνδρ. ε'. τ'. 6.

Vid. ad Olymp. Ep. 13. ad Theod. 1.

mong such as Philosophate, Names of Calamity; void of reality; but the real Calamity this, to be at variance with God, and to do that which displeaseth him; seeing evidently, according to just Estimation, no Evil beareth any Proportion to the evil of Sin, if we have a due Sense thereof, we can hardly be affected with any other Accident; If we can keep our Minds intent upon the heinous Nature, and the lamentable Consequences of Sin, all other Evils cannot but seem exceedingly light and inconsiderable; we cannot but apprehend it a very silly and unhandsome thing to resent or regard them: What (shall we then judge) is Poverty in comparison to the want of a good Conscience? What is Sickness compared to Distemper of Mind, and decay of Spiritual Strength? what is any Disappointment to the being defeated and overthrown by Temptation? what any Loss to the being deprived of God's Love and Favour? what any Disgrace to the being out of Esteem and Respect with God? what any Unfaithfulness or Inconstancy of Friends to having deserted or betray'd our own Soul? what can any danger signifie to that of eternal Misery, incurred by offending God? what Pressure can weigh against the load of Guilt, or what Pain equal that of stinging Remorse? in fine, what condition
can

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can be so bad as that of a wretched sinner? any Case surely is tolerable, is desirable, is lovely and sweet in comparison to this: Would to God, may a Man in this case reasonably say, that I were poor and forlorn as any Beggar; that I were covered all over with Botches and Blains as any *Lazar*; that I were bound to pass my Days in an Hospital or a Dungeon; might I be chained to an Oar, might I lie upon the Rack, so I were clear and innocent: Such Thoughts and Affections if reflecting on our sinful Doings and State do suggest and impress, what place can there be for Resentment of other petty Crosses?

Contrition also upon this Score is productive of a certain sweetness and joy, apt to quash or to allay all worldly Grief: * as it worketh a salutary Repentance not to be repented of, so it therewith breedeth a satisfactory Comfort, which doth ever attend Repentance: He that is very sensible of his Guilt, cannot but consequently much value the Remedy thereof, Mercy; and thence earnestly be moved to seek it; then in Contemplation of Divine Goodness, and considering God's gracious Promises, will be apt to conceive Faith and
Hope,

* 2 Cor. 7. 10. *Vid.* Chrys. *ad* Demet. & *ad* Stelech. Tom. 6.

Hope, upon his imploring Mercy, and Resolution to amend; thence will spring up a chearful Satisfaction, so possessing the Heart, as to expell or to exclude other Displeasures: A holy and a worldly Sadness cannot well consist together.

5. Another good Instrument of Contentedness is sedulous Application of our Minds to honest Employment. Honest Studies and Cares divert our Minds, and drive sad Thoughts from them: They chear our Spirits with wholesome Food and pleasant Entertainments; they yield good Fruits, and a Success accompanied with Satisfaction, which will extinguish or temper Discontent: while we are studious or active, Discontent cannot easily creep in, and soon will be stifled.

Idleness is the great Mother and the Nurse of Discontent; it layeth the Mind open for melancholly Conceits to enter; it yieldeth Harbour to them, and Entertainment there; it depriveth of all the Remedies and Allays which Business affordeth.

Reciprocally Discontent also begetteth Idleness, and by it groweth: they are like * Ice and Water, arising each out of the other: We should therefore not suffer any

* *Mater me genuit.*

any Sadness so to encroach upon us, as to hinder us from attending to our Business (the honest Works and Studies of our Calling) for it thereby will grow stronger and more hardly vincible.

6. A like expedient to remove Discontent is * good Company. It not only sometimes ministreth Advices and Arguments for Content, but raiseth the drooping Spirit, erecting it to a loving Complaisance, drawing it out towards others in Expressions of Kindness, and yielding Delight in those which we receive from others, infecting us by a kind of Contagion with good Humour, and instilling pleasant *Idea's* into our Fancy, agreeably diverting us from sad and irksome Thoughts: Discontent affecteth Retirement and Solitude, as its Element and Food; good Company partly starveth it by smothering sad Thoughts, partly cureth it by exhilarating Discourse. No Man hardly can feel Displeasure, while friendly Conversation entertaineth him; no Man returneth from it without some Refreshment and Ease of Mind.

7. Having right and lowly Conceits of our selves is a most sure guardian and procurer of Content; For answerable to a
I Man's

* Ἀγαθὴ ὁ παρρησιαὶς ὅτιν ἵταίρε.

Man's Judgment of himself are his Repentments of the dealing he meeteth with from God or Man. He that thinks meanly as he ought of himself, will not easily be offended at any thing; any thing, will he think, is good enough for me; I deserve nothing from God, I cannot deserve much of Man; if I have any competence of Provision for my Life, any tolerable Usage, any Respect, it is more than my due, I am bound to be thankful: but he that conceiteth highly (that is vainly) of himself, nothing will satisfie him; nothing, thinks he, is good enough for him, or answerable to his Deserts; no body can yield him sufficient Respect; any small Neglect disturbeth and enrageth him: he cannot endure that any Man should thwart his Interest, should cross his Humour, should dissent from his Opinion: Hence, seeing the World will not easily be induced to Conceit of him as he doth of himself, nor to comply with his Humours and Pretences, it is impossible that he should be content.

8. It conduceth to this purpose to contemplate and resent the publick State of Things, the Interest of the World, of our Country, of God's Church. The Sense of publick Calamities will drown that of private, as unworthy to be considered

dered or compared with them; the Sense of publick Prosperity will allay that of particular Misfortune. How (will a wise and good Man say) can I desire to prosper and flourish, while the State is in Danger or Distress? how can I grieve, seeing my Country is in good Condition? is it just, is it handsome that I should be a Nonconformist either in the publick Sorrow or Joy? Indeed

9. All Hearty Charity doth greatly alleviate Discontent. If we bear such a Good-will to our Neighbour as to have a sincere Compassion of his Evils, and Complacence in his Good, our Case will not much afflict us. If we can appropriate and enjoy the Prosperity, the Wealth, the Reputation, of our Neighbour, by delighting in them, what can we want? what can displease us? If our Heart is enlarged in Pity for the Misfortunes of others, it cannot be contracted with Grief for our own: Our Sorrow, like Water, being thus diffused, cannot be so deep but it will be more fruitful; it will produce such Effects as will comfort and please us; It is stingy Selfishness which maketh us so very sensible of Crosses, and so uncapable of Comfort.

10. Again, If we will attain Contentment, we must take heed of setting our

Affection upon any worldly thing whatever, so as very highly to prize it, very passionately to affect it, very eagerly to pursue it ; so as to conceive our Happiness in any measure to hang on it or stick thereto : If there be any such thing, we shall be disappointed in the acquist, or the Retention of it ; or we shall be dissatisfied in its Enjoyment.

So to adhere in Affection to any thing, is an adulterous disloyalty toward our Maker and best Friend ; from which it is expedient that we should be reclaimed ; whence God (in just Anger, or in kind Mercy) will be apt to cross us in our Attempts to get it, or to deprive us of its Possession ; whence the Displeasure will follow, which always attendeth a Separation from Things we love. But if we be suffered to obtain or to retain it, we shall soon find Dissatisfaction therein : being either disgusted with some bitterness in it (such as doth lurk in every sensible Good) or being cloyed with its Lusciousness : It after a small Enjoyment will become either distastful or insipid.

This, according to continual Experience, is the nature of all things, pleasant only to Sense or Fancy, presently to satiate : No Beauty can long please the Eye, no Melody the Ear, no Delicacy the Pa-
late,

late, no Curiosity the Fancy ; a little time doth waste away, a small use doth wear out the Pleasure, which at first they afford : Novelty commendeth and ingratiateth them ; Distance representeth them fair and lovely ; the want or absence of them rendreth them desirable ; but the Presence of them dulleth their Grace, the Possession of them deadneth the Appetite to them.

New Objects with a gentle and grateful touch warble upon the corporeal Organs, or excite the Spirits into a pleasant frisk of Motion ; but when use hath levigated the Organs, and made the way so smooth and easie that the Spirits pass without any stop, those Objects are no longer felt, or very faintly ; so that the Pleasure ceaseth.

Only those things which Reason (Religious and Sound Reason) doth approve, do yield a lasting (undecaying, unalterable) Satisfaction ; if we set our Affections on them, we cannot fail of Content : In seeking them we cannot be disappointed, for God (without any Reservation or Exception) hath promised to bestow them upon those who seriously and diligently seek them : Nor can we be dispossessed of them ; God will not take them away, and they lie beyond the reach of any o-

ther Hand: Having them then we cannot but fully and durably be satisfied in the Fruition of them; the longer we have them, the more we shall like them; the more we taste them the better we shall relish them: Time wasteth not, but improveth the Sense of their unfading Beauty and indefectible Sweetness.

II. It is of great Influence toward Contentedness, with an earnest and impartial regard to contemplate Things, as they are in themselves, divested of tragical Appearances, in which they are wrapt by our own inconsiderate Fancy, or which vulgar Prejudices do throw upon them: As all things, looked upon by the corporeal Eye through a Mist, do seem bigger than in reality they are, so to the Eye of our Mind all Things, (both Good and Evil) seem hugely enlarged, when viewed through the Fogs of our dusky Imagination, or of popular Conceit. If we will esteem that very Good, which with a gay Appearance dazleth our Imagination, or which the common Admiration and Applause of Men recommendeth, the most vain and worthless, the most dangerous, the most mischievous Things often will appear such; and if we please to account those Things greatly bad which look ugly or horridly to Imagination, which are defamed by the injudicious Part of Men; or which
Men

Men commonly do loath, do fret at, do wail for, we shall take the best, most innocent, most useful, most wholesome Things for such; and accordingly these Errors of our Minds will be followed by a perverse Practice, productive of Dissatisfaction and Displeasure to us. No Man ever will be satisfied, who values Things according to the Price which Fancy setteth on them, or according to the Rate they bear in the common Market; who distinguisheth not between good and famous, bad and infamous; who is affected accordingly with the want of those Things which Men call Good, with the presence of those which they term Bad.

But if we judge of Things as God declareth, as impartial and cautious Reason dictateth, as Experience diligently observed (by their Fruits and Consequences) discovereth them to be, we shall have little cause to be affected by the want, or presence of any such thing which is wont to produce Discontent.

12. We should to this purpose take especial care to search out thro' our Condition, and pick thence the Good that is therein, making the best we can of it, enjoying and improving it; but what is inconvenient or offensive therein, declining it, diminishing it, tempering it so well as

we may, always forbearing to aggravate it. There are in Nature divers Simples, which have in them some Part, or some Juice very noxious, which being severed and cast away, the rest becometh wholesome Food; neither indeed is there any thing in Nature so venomous, but that from it by Art and Industry may be extracted somewhat Medicinal, and of good Use, when duly applied; so in most apparent Evils lieth enclosed much Good, which if we carefully separate (casting away the intermixed Dross and Refuse) we shall find Benefit and taste Comfort thence; there is nothing so thoroughly bad, as being well ordered, and opportunely ministered will not do us much good: So if from Poverty we cast away or bear quietly that which a little pincheth the Sense, or grateth on the Fancy, and enjoy the undistractedness of Mind, the liberty, the leisure, the health, the security from Envy, Obloquy, Strife, which it affordeth, how satisfactory may it become to us? The like Conveniencies are in Disgrace, Disappointment, and other such Evils, which being improved may endear them to us: Even Sin it self (the worst of Evils, the only true Evil) may yield great Benefits to us; it may render us sober and lowly in our own Eyes, devout in imploring Mercy,

Mercy, and thankful to God for it; merciful and charitable toward others in our Opinions and Censures; more laborious in our good Practice, and watchful over our Steps: And if this deadly Poison well administered yieldeth Effects so exceedingly beneficial and salutary, what may other harmless (tho' unhandsome and unpleasant) things do, being skilfully managed?

13. It is a most effectual Means of producing Content, and curing Discontent, to rowse and fortifie our Faith in God, by with most serious Attention reflecting upon the Arguments and Experiments, which assure us concerning God's particular Providence over all, over us. It is really Infidelity (in whole, or in part, no Faith, or a small and weak Faith) which is at the Root as of all Sin, so particularly of Discontent; for how is it possible, did we firmly believe, and with any measure of Attention consider, that God taketh Care of us, that he tendereth our Good, that he is ready at hand to Succour us, (how then, I say, is it possible) that we should fear any Want, or grievously resent any Thing incident? But we like St. Peter are *ὀλιγόπιστοι*, of little Faith, therefore we cannot walk on the sea; but in Despair sink down: Sometimes our Faith is buried in oblivion or

carelesness; we forget, or mind not that there is a Providence; but look on Things as if they fell out casually or fatally; thence expect no Redress from Heaven, so tumble into Despair and Disconsolateness. Sometimes because God doth not in our Time, and our Way relieve us, or gratifie us, we slip into profane Doubt, questioning in our Hearts whether he doth indeed regard us, or whether any Relief is to be expected from him; not considering, that only God can tell when and how it is best to proceed; that often it is not expedient our Wishes should be granted; that we are not wise enough, or just enough to appoint or chuse for our selves; that it is impossible for God to gratifie every Man; that it would be a mad World, if God in his Government thereof should satisfie all our Desires.

We forget how often God hath succoured us in our Needs and Straits, how continually he hath provided for us; how patiently and mercifully he hath born with us; what Miracles of Bounty and Mercy he hath performed in our behalf; we are like that distrustful and inconsiderate People, who ** remembred not the hand of God, nor the day when he delivered them; † remembred*

* Psal. 78. 42.

† Psal. 106. 7, 13, 21.

membred not the multitude of his mercies; but soon forgat his works, and waited not for his counsel; They forgat God their Saviour, who had done great things in Egypt, wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things in the red sea.

From such Dispositions in us our Discontents do spring; and we cannot cure them, but by recollecting our selves from such Forgetfulness and Negligence; by † shaking off such wicked Doubts and Distrusts; by fixing our Hearts and Hopes on him, who alone can Help us; who is || *our strength, the strength of our heart, of our life, of our salvation.*

Of him (to conclude) let us humbly implore, that he in mercy would bestow upon us Grace to submit in all things to his Will, to acquiesce in all his Dispensations, gladly to embrace and undergo whatever he allotteth to us; in every Condition, and for all Events befalling us, heartily to adore, thank and bless him: Even so to the ever blessed God, our gracious Maker and Preserver, be eternally rendred all Glory, Thanksgiving and Praise. *Amen.*

† Psal. 22. 19. 46. 1. 81. 1. 59. 7. 144. 1.

|| Psal. 73. 26. 27. 1. 140. 7.

O F

P A T I E N C E.

The Sixth SERMON.

I P E T. II. 21.

Because also Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.

IN these Words two Things appear especially observable ; a Duty implied (the *Duty of Patience*) and a Reason expressed, which enforceth the Practice of that Duty (the *Example of Christ.*) We shall (using no more Preface or Circumstance) first briefly, in way of Explanation and Direction, touch the Duty it self, then more largely describe and urge the Example.

The word *Patience* hath, in common Usage, a double Meaning, taken from the respect it hath unto two sorts of Objects, somewhat different. As it respecteth Provocations

vocations to Anger and Revenge by Injuries, or Discourtesies, it signifieth a disposition of Mind to bear them with charitable Meekness; as it relateth to Adversities and Crosses dispensed to us by Providence, it importeth a pious undergoing and sustaining them. That both these kinds of Patience may here be understood, we may, consulting and considering the Context, easily discern; that which immediately precedeth, *If when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable to God*, relateth to good endurance of Adversity; that which presently followeth, *who when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered he threatned not*, referreth to meek comporting with Provocations: The Text therefore, as it looketh backward, doth recommend the patience of Adversities, as forward, the patience of Contumelies. But seeing both these Objects are reducible to one more general, comprizing both, that is, things seeming Evil to us, or offensive to our Sense, we may so explicate the Duty of Patience, as to include them both.

Patience then is that Virtue, which qualifieth us to bear all Conditions, and all Events, by God's disposal incident to us, with such apprehensions and persuasions of Mind, such dispositions and affecti-
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ons of Heart, such external deportments and practices of Life, as God requireth, and good Reason directeth. Its Nature will, I conceive, be understood best by considering the chief Acts which it produceth, and wherein especially the Practice thereof consisteth; the which briefly are these:

1. A thorough Persuasion, that nothing befalleth us by Fate, or by Chance, or by the mere agency of inferior Causes, but that all proceedeth from the Dispensation, or with the Allowance of God, (that * *Affliction doth not come forth of the dust, nor doth trouble spring out of the ground; but that all, both † good and evil proceedeth out of the mouth of the most high*) according as David reflected, when Shimei reviled him; ‡ *Let him* (said the good King) *curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, curse David; and as Job, when he was spoiled of all his Goods acknowledged, || The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.*

2. A firm Belief, that all Occurrences (however adverse and cross to our Desires) are well consistent with the Justice, Wisdom and Goodness of God; so that we cannot reasonably disapprove, repine at,

or

* Job 5. 6. † Lam. 3. 38.

‡ 2 Sam. 16. 10. || Job 1. 21.

or complain of them; but are bound and ready to avow with the *Psalmist*, that, * *all his paths are mercy and truth; He is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works; to judge and say with Hezekiah, † Good is the word of the Lord, which thou hast spoken; to confess with David unto him, § I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right; and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*

3. A full Satisfaction of Mind, that all (even the most bitter and sad Accidents) do (according to God's Purpose) tend and conduce to our Good; acknowledging the Truth of those || *divine Aphorismes; Happy is the man whom God correcteth; whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a Father the Son, in whom he delighteth. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.*

4. An entire Submission and Resignation of our Wills to the Will of God; suppressing all rebellious Insurrections, and grievous Resentments of Heart against his Providence; which may dispose us heartily to say after our Lord, ‡ *Let not my will, but thine be done; with good Eli, † It is the Lord, Let him do what seemeth him good; with*

* *Psal.* 25. 10. 145. 17. † *2 King.* 20. 19.

§ *Psal.* 119. 75. || *Job* 5. 17. *Jam.* 1. 12. *Prov.* 3. 12. *Heb.* 12. 5. *Rev.* 3. 19.

‡ *Luc.* 22. 42. † *1 Sam.* 3. 18.

with *David*, †† *Here I am*, let him do to me as seemeth good to him; yea even with *Socrates*, If so it pleaseth God, so let it be.

5. Bearing Adversities calmly, chearfully and courageously; so as not to be discomposed with Anger, or Grief; not to be put out of Humour, not to be dejected or disheartned; but in our Disposition of Mind to resemble the primitive Saints, who were * *ὡς λυπήμενοι, ἀεὶ ὃ χαίροντες*, as grieved, but always rejoycing; who † took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, who § accounted it all joy when they fell into divers tribulations.

6. A hopeful Confidence in God for the Removal or Easement of our Afflictions, and for his gracious Aid to support them well; agreeable to those good Rules and Precepts: || *It is good that a man should both hope, and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord; † Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him; wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; according to the Pattern of David, who, in such a Case, thus roused and staid himself: † Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance; and after the holy Apo-*
stles

† 2 Sam. 15. 26. * Cor. 6. 10. † Heb. 10. 34. § Jam. 1. 2.

|| Lam. 3. 26. ‡ Psal. 37. 7. 27. 14. † Psal. 42. 5.

bles, who in their most forlorn Estate could say, * *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.*

7. A Willingness to continue, during God's Pleasure, in our afflicted State, without Weariness, or irksome Longings for Alteration; according to that Advice of the *Wiseman*; † *My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of his correction*; and that of the *Apostle*, back'd with our Lord's Example; § *Considering him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary, and faint in your minds.*

8. A lowly frame of Mind (that is, being sober in our Conceits of our selves, sensible of our Unworthiness, and Meanness, of our natural Frailty, Penury, and Wretchedness; of our manifold Defects and Miscarriages in Practice; being meek and gentle, tender and pliable in our Temper and frame of Spirit; being deeply affected with Reverence and Dread toward the awful Majesty, mighty Power, perfect Justice and Sanctity of God; all this) wrought by our Adversity effectually, according to its Design, quelling our haughty Stomach, soft-

* 2 Cor. 4. 8. † Prov. 3. 11. § Heb. 12. 3.

softning our hard Hearts, mitigating our peevish Humours; according to Saint Peter's Injunction, || *Be humbled under the mighty hand of God*; and God's own Approbation joined with a gracious Promise, ‡ *To this man will I look; even to him that is of a poor and contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*

9. Restraining our Tongues from all discontentful Complaints and Murmurings, all prophane, harsh, unsavoury Expressions, importing Displeasure or Dissatisfaction in God's dealings towards us, arguing Desperation or Distrust in him; such as were those of the impatient and incredulous *Israelites*; † *They spake against God, and said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? behold he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also, can he provide flesh for his people?* Such as they used, of whom the Prophet said — § *When they shall be hungry, they will fret themselves, and curse their King, and their God*; such as they were guilty of, whom St. Jude calleth* *ῥοῖς ὡς αἰ, καὶ μὲν ψιμοῖσιν, murmurers, and querulous persons* (or such as found Fault with their Lot) that which is styled, *charging God*

|| 1 Pet. 5. 6. † Ez. 66. 2. ‡ Psal. 78. 19, 20.
§ Isa. 8. 21. * Jud. 16.

God foolishly; for abstaining from which (notwithstanding the pressure of his most grievous Calamities) Job is commended (where 'tis said, † *Job sinned not, neither charged God foolishly*) that which the Prophet condemneth as unreasonable in that Expostulation, § *Wherefore doth the living man complain?* in such Cases we should smother our Passions in a still and silent Demeanour, as the Psalmist || advised, and as he practised himself: ‡ *I was dumb* (saith he) *and opened not my mouth, because is was thy doing.* Yea contrariwise Patience requireth,

10. Blessing and praising God (that is, declaring our hearty Satisfaction in God's Proceedings with us, acknowledging his Wisdom, Justice and Goodness therein, expressing a grateful Sense thereof, as wholesome and beneficial to us) in Conformity to Job, who, upon the Loss of all his Comforts, did thus vent his Mind: * *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.*

11. Abstaining from all irregular and unworthy Courses toward the Removal, or Redress of our Crosses; chusing rather to abide quietly under their Pressure, than by any

† Job 1. 22. § Lam. 3. 39. || Psal. 37. 7. 46. 10. 4. 4.
‡ Psal. 39. 9. * Job 1. 21.

any unwarrantable Means to relieve or relaxe our selves; contentedly wearing, rather than violently † *breaking our yoke*, or *bursting our bonds*; rather continuing poor, than striving to enrich our selves by Fraud or Rapine; rather lying under Contempt, than by sinful or sordid Compliances attempting to gain the Favour and Respect of Men; rather embracing the meanest Condition, than labouring by any turbulent, unjust or uncharitable Practices to amplify our Estate; rather enduring any Inconvenience or Distress, than § *setting our faces toward Egypt*, or having Recourse to any Succour which God disalloweth; according to what is implied in that Reprehension of St. Paul, ¶ *Now therefore it is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another; Why do ye not rather take wrong; why do ye not rather suffer your selves to be defrauded?* and in that Advice of St. Peter; * *Let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful creatour.*

12. A fair Behaviour toward the Instruments and Abettors of our Affliction; those who brought us into it, or who detain us under it, by keeping off Relief, or sparing to yield the Succour which we might expect; the forbearing to express any Wrath or Displea-

† Jer. 5. 5. § Jer. 42. 15. || 1 Cor. 6. 7. * 1 Pet. 4. 19.

pleasure, to exercise any revenge, to retain any Grudge or Enmity toward them; but rather even upon that score bearing Good-will, and shewing Kindness unto them; unto them, not only as to our Brethren, whom according to the general Law of Charity we are bound to love, but as to the Servants of God in this particular Case, or as to the Instruments of his Pleasure towards us; considering that by maligning or mischieving them, we do signifie ill Resentment of God's Dealings with us, and in effect through their sides, do wound his Providence; thus did the *pious King* demean himself, when he was bitterly reproached, and cursed by * *Shimei*; not suffering (upon this Account) any Harm or Requital to be offered to him; thus did the holy *Apostles*, who † *being reviled did bless, being persecuted did bear it, being defamed did entreat*; thus did our *Lord* deport himself toward his spiteful Adversaries, who § *being reviled did not revile again; when he suffered did not threaten, but committed it to him that judgeth righteously.*

13. Particularly in regard to those, who by injurious and offensive Usage, do provoke us; Patience importeth,

1. That we be not hastily, over-easily, not immoderately, not pertinaciously incensed

• 2 Sam: 16. 7. † 1 Cor. 4. 12. § 1 Pet. 2. 23. 3. 9

censed with Anger toward them; according to those divine Precepts and Aphorismes: *|| Be slow to Wrath; Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry; for anger resteth in the bosome of fools. Give place to wrath (that is remove it.) Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. Cease from anger, let go displeasure, fret not thyself any wise to do evil.*

2. That we do not in our Hearts harbour any ill Will, or ill Wishes, or ill Designs toward them, but that we truly desire their good, and purpose to further it, as we shall have Ability and Occasion; according to that Law (even charged on the Jews,) *† Thou shalt not bear any grudge against the children of thy people; but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self; and according to that noble Command of our Saviour; * Love your enemies, pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.*

3. That in effect we do not execute any Revenge, or for Requital do any Mischief to them, either in Word or Deed; but for their Reproaches exchange Blessings

|| Jam. 1. 19. Eccles. 7. 9. Prov. 16. 32. 14. 17. 29. Rom. 12. 19. Eph. 4. 31. 26. Colos. 3. 8. Mat. 5. 21, 24. Psal. 37. 8.

† Levit. 19. 18. *** Mat. 5. 44. Luc. 6. 27:

sings (or good words and Wishes) for their Outrages repay Benefits and good Turns; according to those Evangelical Rules † *Do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you: § bless them that persecute you, bless and curse not: || See that none render evil for evil: ‡ Be pitiful, be courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing: † If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: †† Say not, I will do to him as he hath done to me; I will render to the man according to his work: Say thou not, I will recompence evil, but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee.*

14. In fine, Patience doth include and produce a general Meekness and Kindness of Affection, together with an enlarged Sweetness and Pleasantness in Conversation and Carriage towards all Men; implying, that, how hard soever our Case, how sorry or sad our Condition is, we are not therefore angry with the World, because we do not thrive, or flourish in it; that we are not dissatisfied, or disgusted with the prosperous Estate of other Men; that we are not become sullen or froward toward any Man, because his Fortune excelleth ours; but that rather we do * *rejoice with*

† Mat. 5. 44, 39. § Rom. 12. 14. || 1 Thes. 5. 15.

‡ 1 Pet. 3. 9. † Prov. 25. 21. Rom. 12. 20.

†† Prov. 24. 29. 20. 22. * Rom. 12. 15.

with them that rejoice; we do find Complacency and Delight in their good Success, we borrow Satisfaction and Pleasure from their Enjoyments.

In these and the like Acts, the Practice of this Virtue (a Virtue which all Men, in this State of inward Weakness, and outward Trouble, shall have much need and frequent Occasion to exercise) consisteth; unto which Practice, even Philosophy, natural Reason, and common Sense do suggest many Inducements; the Tenour of our holy Faith and Religion do supply more and better; but nothing can more clearly direct, or more powerfully excite thereto, than that admirable Example, by which our Text doth enforce it: Some Principal of those rational Inducements we shall cursorily touch, then insist upon this Example.

It will generally induce us to bear patiently all things incident, if we consider, That it is the natural Right and Prerogative of God to dispose of all things, to assign our Station here, and allot our Portion to us; whence it is a most wrongful Insolence in us, by complaining of our State, to contest his Right, or impeach his Management thereof; That we are obliged to God's free Bounty for numberless great Benefits and Favours; whence it

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is vile Ingratitude to be displeased for the want of some lesser Inconveniences; That God having undertaken and promised to support and succour us, it is a heinous Affront to distrust him, and consequently to be dissatisfied with our Condition; That seeing God doth infinitely better understand what is good for us, than we can do; he is better affected toward us, and more truly loveth us than we do ourselves; he with an unquestionable Right hath an uncontrollable Power to dispose of us, it is most reasonable to acquiesce in his Choice of our State; that since we have no Claim to any Good, or any Pleasure, and thence in withholding any, no Wrong is done to us, 'tis unjust and frivolous to murmur, or grumble; since we are, by Nature, God's Servants, it is fit the Appointment of our Rank, our Garb, our Diet, all our Accommodations and Employments in his Family, should be left entirely to his Discretion and Pleasure; that we being grievous Sinners, *less than the least of God's mercies*, meriting no good, but deserving fore Punishment from him, it is just that we should be highly content and thankful for any thing on this side Death and Damnation; That our Afflictions being the natural Fruits and Results of our Choice, or voluntary Miscarriages, it is reasonable we

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should

should blame our selves rather than pick quarrels with Providence for them. That our Condition, be it what it will, cannot, being duly estimated, be extremely bad, or insupportably grievous; for that as no Condition here is perfectly and purely Good (not deficient in some Accommodations, not blended with some Troubles) so there is none that hath not its Conveniencies and Comforts; for that it is our fond Conceits, our froward Humours, our perverse Behaviours, which create the Mischiefs adherent to any State; for that also how forlorn soever our Case is, we cannot fail, if we please, of a capacity to enjoy Goods far more than countervailing all possible want of these Goods, or presence of these Evils; we may have the use of our Reason, a good Conscience, hope in God, assurance of God's Love and Favour, abundance of spiritual Blessings here, and a certain Title to eternal Glory and Bliss hereafter; which if we can have, our Condition cannot be deemed uncomfortable. That indeed our Adversity is a Thing very good and wholesome, very profitable and desirable, as a means of breeding, improving and exercising the best Virtues, of preparing us for, and entitling us to the best Rewards. That our State cannot ever be desperate,
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our Adversity probably may not be lasting (there being no connexion between the present and the future, Vicissitudes being frequent, all Things depending on the arbitrary Dispensation of God, who doth always pity us, and is apt to relieve us.) That however our Affliction will not outlive our selves, and certainly must soon expire with our Life. That this World is not a Place of perfect Convenience, or pure Delight; we come not hither to do our Will, or enjoy our Pleasure, we are not born to make Laws, or pick our Condition here; but that *trouble* is natural and proper to us (* *We are born thereto, as the sparks fly upwards.*) † *No tribulation seisseth us, but such as is human*; whence 'tis reasonable that we contentedly bear the Crosses suitable to our Nature and State. That no Adversity is in kind or degree, peculiar to us, but if we survey the Conditions of other Men (of our Brethren everywhere, of our Neighbours all about us) and compare our Case with theirs, we shall find that we have many Consorts and Associates in Adversity, most as ill, many far worse bestead than our selves; whence it must be a great fondness and perverseness to be displeased that we are

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not

* Job 5. 7. † 1 Cor. 10. 13.

not exempted from, but exposed to bear a share in the common Troubles and Burthens of Mankind. That it hath particularly been the Lot of the best Men (Persons most excellent in Virtue, and most deep in God's Favour) to sustain Adversity; and it therefore becometh us willingly and chearfully to accept it. That, in fine, Patience it self is the best Remedy to ease us in, to rescue us from Adversity; for it cannot much annoy us, if we bear it patiently; God will in mercy remove it, if we please him, by demeaning our selves well under it; but that Impatience doth not at all conduce to our Relief, doth indeed exasperate and augment our Pain: Such Considerations may induce us to a Patience in general respecting all sorts of Evil.

There are also Reasons particularly disposing to bear Injuries and Contumelies from Men calmly and meekly, without immoderate Wrath, rancorous Hatred, or spiteful Revenge toward them; because they do proceed from Divine Providence, disposing or permitting them (for the trial of our Patience, the abasing our Pride, the exercising of some other Virtues, or for other good Purposes) to fall upon us; because vindication of Misdemeanours committed against us doth not appertain to us;
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we not being competent Judges of them, nor rightful Executors of the Punishments due to them, God having reserved to himself the right of Decision, and power of Execution: * *Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, I will repay it.* Because we are obliged to Interpret charitably the Actions of our Neighbour, supposing his Miscarriages to proceed from Infirmary, from Mistake, or from some Cause which we should be rather inclinable to excuse, than to prosecute with Hatred or Revenge: Because indeed our Neighbours most culpable Offences, as issuing from distemper of Mind, are more reasonably the Objects of Compassion and Charity, than of Anger or Ill-will. Because we are bound to forgive all Injuries, by the Command of God, and in Conformity to his Example, who passeth by innumerable most heinous Offences committed against himself: † *Gracious is the Lord, and full of compassion, slow to anger, and of great mercy; long suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth;* so must we be also, if we will be like him, or please him. Because we our selves, being subject to incur the same Faults in kind, or greater in value, do need much Pardon, and should

K 3 thence

* Rom. 12. 19. Heb. 10. 30. Deut. 32. 35, 36.
 Vid. Tert. de Pat. cap. 10.

† Psal. 145. 8. 86. 15.

thence be ready to allow it unto others; both in Equity, and in Gratitude toward God; lest that in the Gospel be applied to us; † *O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me; Shouldst not thou also have had compassion upon thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?* Because God hath made it a necessary Condition of our obtaining Mercy; promising us Favour if we yield it, menacing us extremity, if we refuse it: § *If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you; But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses.* Because our Neighbour suffering by our Revenge in any manner (in his Body, Interest, or Reputation) doth not any-wise profit us, or benefit our Estate, but needlessly doth multiply and encrease the stock of Mischief in the World; yea commonly doth bring farther Evil upon our selves, provoking him to go on in offending us, rendering him more implacably bent against us, engaging us consequently deeper in Strife and Trouble: Because no Wrong, no Disgrace, no Prejudice we can receive from
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† Matt. 18. 32.

§ Matt. 6. 14. Ecclus. 8. 2. Matt. 18. 35. Matt. 11. 25.

from Men, is of much consequence to us, if our Mind be not disorder'd, if we are free from those bad Passions, which really are the worst Evils that can befall us. Because, in fine, Impatience it self is insignificant and ineffectual to any good Purpose, or rather produceth ill Effects; * It doth not cure our Wound, or assuage our Grief; it removeth no Inconvenience, nor repaireth any Damage we have received; but rather enflameth our Distemper, and aggravateth our Pain; more really indeed molesting and hurting us, than the Injury or Discourtesie which causeth it: Thus briefly doth Reason dictate to us the Practice of all Patience.

But the Example proposed by the *Apostle* here, and otherwhere by St. Paul († *Let the same mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus* —) by the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews* (‡ *Let us run with patience the race that is set before us: Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith* —) by our Lord himself (|| *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly*) doth in a more lively man-

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* Idcirco quis te ladit ut doleas, quia fructus ladentis in dolore lassus est. Tert. de Pat. 8.

Si patientia incubabo, non dolebo; si non dolebo, ulcisci non desiderabo. Ib. 10.

† Phil. 2. 5. ‡ Heb. 12. 1, 2. || Matt. 11. 29.

ner express how in such Cases we should deport our selves, and most strongly engageth us to comply with Duties of this Nature. Let us now therefore describe it, and recommend it to your Consideration.

The Example of our * Lord was indeed in this kind the most remarkable that ever was presented, the most perfect that can be imagined: He was, above all Expression, † *a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*; he did undertake, as to perform the best Works, so to endure the worst Accidents, to which Human Nature is subject; his whole Life being no other than one continual exercise of Patience and Meekness, in all the Parts, and to the utmost Degrees of them: If we trace the footsteps of his Life, from the sordid Manger to the bloody Cross, we shall not be able to observe any matter of Complacence, scarce any of Comfort (in respect to his natural or worldly State) to have befallen him.

His Parentage was mean, to appearance, and his Birth in all exterior Circumstances, despicable: ‡ *Is not this the Carpenter's Son?* were words of Contempt and Offence, upon all Occasions thrown upon him.

His

* Vid. Tertull. de Pat. c. 3. Cypr. de Pat. T. 2. p. 315.

† Il. 53. 3. ‡ Matt. 13. 55. Marc. 6. 3.

His Life was spent not only in continual Labour, and restless Travel, but in hard Poverty, yea in extreme Penury, beneath the State, not only of the meanest Men, but of the most shifting Beasts: || *The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*

For his necessary Sustenance we find him often * destitute of ordinary Provision (as when he sought Food from the barren Fig-tree) often indebted for it to the Courtesie and (as it were) Alms of the vilest People, of *Publicans and Sinners*: so *ὁ ἡμᾶς ἐπιβόησεν*, † *he was* (as the *Apostle* saith) *a beggar for us.*

Yet may we never perceive him anywise discontented with, or complaining of his Condition; not discouraged or depressed in Spirit thereby, not solicitously endeavouring any Correction or Change thereof; but willingly embracing it, heartily acquiescing therein; and notwithstanding all its Inconveniencies, chearfully discharging Duties, vigorously pursuing his main Designs of procuring Glory to God, and Benefit to Men.

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Nor

|| Matt. 8. 20.

* Matt. 21. 18, 19. *Nullius mensam, tectumve desepexit.* Tert.

† 2 Cor. 8. 9.

Nor did he only with Content undergo the Incommodities of a poor Estate, but he was surrounded with continual Dangers; the most powerful Men of those times (enraged with Envy, Ambition and Avarice) desperately maligning him; and being incessantly attentive upon all Occasions to molest, hurt and destroy him: * *The world* (as he saith himself, that is, all the powerful and formidable part of the World) *bating me*; Yet did not this any-wise dismay or distemper him, nor cause him either to repine at his Condition, or decline his Duty. He utterly disregarded all their spiteful Machinations, persisting immovable in the Prosecution of his pious and charitable Undertakings, to the Admiration of those who observed his Demeanour: † *Is not this he* (said they) *whom they seek to kill? but lo he speaketh boldly.*

He did indeed § sometimes opportunely shun their Fury, and prudently did elude their Snares, but never went violently to repel them, or to execute any Revenge for them; improving the wonderful Power he was endowed with, altogether to the Advantage of Mankind, never to the Bane or Hurt of his malicious Enemies.

Sen-

* John 15. 18. † John 7. 25. § Luc. 4. 30. Matt. 21. 27. 22. 18.

Sensible enough he was of the causeless Hatred they bare him; (*ἐμίσησάν με ὧρεάν*, ‡ *They, said he, have hated me for nothing:*) and of their extream Ingratitude; yet never could he be provoked to resent, or requite their Dealing; see how mildly he did expostulate the Case with them; || *Then* (saith St. John) *the Jews took up stones to stone him: Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father, for which of those do ye stone me?*

To be extreamly hated, and inhumanely persecuted without any Fault committed, or just Occasion offered, is greatly incentive of humane Passion; but for the purest and strongest good-will, for the most unexpressible Beneficence, to be recompenced with most virulent Reproaches, most odious Slanders, most Outrageous Misusages, How exceeding was that Meekness, which without any Signification of Regret or Disgust, could endure it?

Out of most tender Charity, and ardent Desire of their Salvation, † he instructed them, and instilled heavenly Doctrine into their Minds; what Thanks, what Reward did he receive for that great Favour? to be reputed and reported an Impostor:

πλανά

‡ Joh. 15. 25. || Joh. 10. 31. † Matt. 23. 37.

πλανᾷ τὸν ὄχλον * *he (said they) doth impose upon the People.*

He took Occasion to impart the great Blessing of Pardon for Sin to some of them, confirming his Authority of doing it by a miraculous Work of Goodness; How did they resent such an Obligation? by accounting him a Blasphemer: † *Behold (saith Saint Mathew) certain of the Scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth:* which most harsh and uncharitable Censure of theirs he did not fiercely reprehend, but calmly discussed, and refuted by a clear Reasoning; *τί ἐνθυμεῖσθε πονηρὸν;* *Wherefore conceive ye evil in your hearts; for whether is easier to say, thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say, arise and walk?* that is, Is it not credible that he, who can perform the one, may dispense the other?

§ He freed them from most grievous Diseases, yea rescued them from the greatest Mischief possible in Nature, being ‡ possessed by the unclean Fiend; How did they entertain this mighty Benefit? by most horrible Calumny, accusing him of Sorcery, or Conspiracy with the Devil himself; || *The Pharisees said, he casteth out Devils by the Prince of the Devils;* yea thence attributing to him the very Name and Title

* Job. 7. 12. Matt. 27. 63. † Matt. 9. 3. &c.

§ *Ingratos curavit, insidiatoribus cessit.* Tert.

‡ Act. 10. 38. || Mat. 9. 34. 12. 24.

tle of the grand Devil: † *If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more (shall they defame) them of his Household?* Yet this most injurious Defamation he no otherwise rebuketh, than by a mild Discourse, strongly confuting it; * *Every Kingdom (said he) divided against it self, is brought to desolation — and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his Kingdom stand?* that is, the Devil better understands his Interest, than to assist any Man in dispossessing himself.

He did constantly labour in reclaiming them from Errour and Sin, in converting them to God and Goodness, in proposing fair Overtures of Grace and Mercy to them, in shewing them by Word and Practice the sure way to Happiness; What Issue was there of all his Care and Pains? What but Neglect, Distrust, Disappointment, Rejection of himself, of what he said, and what he did? † *Who hath believed our Report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?* was a Prophecy, abundantly verified by their Carriage toward him.

These, and the like Usages, which he perpetually did encounter, he constantly received.

† Mat. 10. 25. * Mtat. 12. 25. † Joh. 12. 38.

received without any passionate Disturbance of Mind, any bitter Reflections upon that Generation, any revengeful Enterprises against them; yea requited them with continued Earnestness of hearty Desires, and laborious Endeavours for their good.

We might observe the ingrateful Disrespects of his own Countrymen and Kindred toward him, which he passeth over without any grievous Disdain; rather excusing it, by noting that Entertainment to have been no peculiar accident to himself, but usual to all of like Employment; || *No Prophet (said he) is acceptable in his own country.*

We might also mention his patient suffering Repulses from Strangers; as ‡ when being refused Admittance into a *Samaritanæ* Village, and his Disciples being incensed with that rude Discourtesie, would have Fire called down from Heaven to consume those Churls, he restrained their unadvised Wrath, and thus expressed his admirable Meekness; **The Son of man is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save them.*

We might likewise remark his meek comporting with the stupid and †perverse
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|| Luc. 4. 24. Matt. 13. 57.

‡ Non illi saltem civitati qua eum recipere noluerat, iratus est, cum etiam discipuli tam contumelioso oppido coelestes ignes representari voluissent. Tert. * Luc. 9. 53, 56.

† Luc. 9. 41. Mat. 17. 17. Non peccatores, non publicanos aspernatus est. Tert.

Incredulity of his Disciples, notwithstanding so many pregnant and palpable Inducements, continually exhibited for Confirmation of their Faith; the which he no otherwise, than sometimes gently, admonisheth them of, saying, * *τί δειλοί ἐσε, ὀλιγόπιστοι; Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? ὀλιγόπιστε, τί ἐδίσσασας; O thou of small faith, why didst thou doubt?*

What should I insist on these, although very remarkable Instances? since that one Scene of his most grievous (shall I say, or glorious) Passion doth represent unto us a perfect, and most lively Image of the highest Patience and Meekness possible; of the greatest Sorrow that ever was or could be, yet of a Patience surmounting it; of the extreamest Malice that ever was conceived, yet of a Charity overswaying it; of Injury most intolerable, yet of a Meekness willingly and sweetly bearing it? There may we observe the greatest Provocations from all Hands to passionate Animosity of Spirit, and intemperate Heat of Speech, yet no Discovery of the least disorderly, angry, or revengeful Thought, the least rash, bitter, or reproachful Word, but all undergone with the clearest Serenity of Mind, and Sweetness of Carriage toward all Persons. To

* Matt. 8. 26. 14. 31.

To *Judas* who betray'd him, how doth he address himself? Doth he use such Terms as the Man deserved, or as Passion would have suggested, and Reason would not have disallowed? Did he say, Thou most perfidious Villain, thou Monster of Iniquity and Ingratitude; thou desperately wicked Wretch; Dost thou, prompted by thy base Covetousness, treacherously attempt to ruin thy gracious Master and best Friend; thy most benign and bountiful Saviour? No, instead of such proper Language, he useth the most courteous and endearing Terms: † *Ἐταῖρε, ἐφ' ᾧ παρει;* *Friend* (or Companion) *for what dost thou come?* Or what is thy Business here? a Tacite charitable Warning there is to reflect upon his unworthy and wicked Action, but nothing apparent of Wrath or Reproach.

From his own Disciples and Servants, who had beheld his many miraculous works, and were indebted to him for the greatest Favours, he reasonably might have expected a most faithful Adherence, and most diligent Attendance on him in that Juncture; yet he found them careless and slothful: What then? How did he take it? Was he angry, did he upbraid, did he

† Mat. 26. 50.

he storm at them? Did he threaten to discard them? No; he only first gently admonisheth them: § *What, could ye not watch one hour with me?* then a little exciteh them, *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation:* He withal suggesteth an Excuse for their Drowsiness and Dulness; *The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak;* in fine, he indulgeth to their Weakness, letting them alone, and saying καθεύετε λοιπόν, *Sleep on now and take your rest.*

When he foresaw they would be offended at his (to Appearance) disastrous Estate, and fearfully would desert him, he yet expressed no Indignation against them, or decrease of Affection toward them upon that Score; but simply ‡ mentioneth it, as unconcerned in it, and not affected thereby.

And the unworthy Apostacy of that Disciple, whom he had especially favoured and dignify'd, he only did mildly forewarn him of, requiting it foreseen by the Promise of his own effectual Prayers for his Support and Recovery; and when St. Peter had committed that heinous Fact, our good Lord only || *looked on him* with an Eye of Charity and Compassion; which more efficaciously struck him, than the most dreadful Threat, or sharp Reprehension

§ Matt. 26. 40, 45. ‡ Matt. 26. 31. || Luc. 22. 61, 62.
Ενέβλεψε τῷ Πέτρῳ.

sion could have done; *Peter* thereupon went out, and wept bitterly.

When the High-Priest's Officer, upon no reasonable Occasion, did injuriously and ignominiously strike him, he returned only this mild Expostulation: * *If I have spoken Evil, bear witness of the evil; if well, why smitest thou me?* that is, I advise thee to proceed in a fair and legal Way against me, not to deal thus boisterously and wrongfully, to thy own Harm.

Even careful and tender he was of those, who were the Instruments of his Suffering; he protected them from harm, who conducted him to Execution; as we see in the Case of the † High-Priests Servant, whom (with more Zeal than wherewith he ever regarded his own Safety) he defended from the Fury of his own Friend, and cured of the Wounds receiv'd in the way of persecuting himself.

All his Demeanour under that great Trial was perfectly calm, not the least regret or reluctance of Mind, the least contradiction or obloquy of Speech appearing therein; such it was as became † *the lamb of God*, who was to take away the sins of the world, by a willing Oblation of himself; such as did exactly correspond to the ancient

* Joh. 18. 23. Cypr. Epist. 65. † Luc. 22. 51, &c.
† Isa. 53. 7.

ent Prophecies; *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth; and, † I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting.*

Neither did the wrongful Slanders devised and alleged against him by suborned Witnesses, nor the virulent Invectives of the Priests, nor the barbarous Clamours of the People, nor the contemptuous Spitting upon him and Buffeting him, nor the cruel Scourgings, nor the contumelious Mockeries, nor all the bloody Tortures inflicted upon him, wring from him one syllable, importing any Dissatisfaction in his case, any Wrath conceived for his Misusages, any grudge or ill-will in his Mind toward his Persecutors; but, on the contrary, instead of Hatred and Revenge, he declared the greatest Kindness and Charity toward them, praying heartily to God his Father for the Pardon of their Sins. Instead of aggravating their Crime and Injury against him, he did in a sort extenuate and excuse it, by consideration of their Ignorance and Mistake: ‡ *Father* (said he,

† Isa. 50. 6. ‡ Luke 23. 34.

he in the height of his Sufferings) *forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

The Life they so violently bereaved him of, he did willingly mean to lay down for the Ransom of their Lives; the Blood they spilt he wished to be as salutary Balsam for their Wounds and Maladies; he most cheerfully did offer himself by their Hands a Sacrifice for their Offences. No small part of his Afflictions was a sense of their so grievously displeasing God, and pulling Mischief on their own Heads, a foresight of his kind Intentions being frustrated by their obstinate Incredulity and Impenitence, a reflection upon that inevitable Vengeance, which from the Divine Justice would attend them; this foreseen did work in him a distasteful Sense, (more grievous than what his own Pain could produce) and drew from him Tears of Compassion (such as no Resentment of his own Case could extort) for, *|| When he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying; O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace.*

If ever he did express any Commotion of Mind in reference to this Matter, it was when one of his Friends, out of a blind

blind fondness of Affection, did presume to dissuade him from undergoing these Evils; then indeed, being somewhat moved with Indignation, he said to St. Peter, * *Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.*

Neither was it out of a stupid Insensibility, or stubborn Resolution, that he did thus behave himself; † for he had a most vigorous Sense of all those Grievances, and a strong (natural) Aversion from undergoing them; as those dolorous Agonies wherewith he struggled; those deadly Groans he uttered; those monstrous lumps of Blood he sweat out; those earnest Prayers he made to be freed from them, declare; but from a perfect Submission to the Divine Will, an entire Command over his Passions, an excessive Charity toward Mankind, this patient and meek Behaviour did spring: ‡ *The Cup which my father hath given me, shall I not drink it? || O my father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt? Let not my will, but thine be done. § No man taketh*

* Matt. 16. 23.

† Matt. 26. 37, 38. Luke 22. 44. John 12. 27.

Matt. 26. 39 Heb. 5. 7.

‡ John 18. 11. || Matt. 26. 39. Luke 22. 42.

§ John 10. 18. 6. 51.

taketh away my life, but I lay it down of my own accord; I will give my flesh for the life of the world: So doth our Lord himself express the true Grounds of his Passion and his Patience.

Such is the Example of our Lord; the serious Consideration whereof how can it otherwise than work Patience and Meekness in us? If he that was *the Lord of glory* (infinitely excellent in Dignity and Virtue) did so readily embrace, did so contentedly endure such extremities of Penury, Hardship, Disgrace and Pain, how can we refuse them, or repine at them? Can we pretend to a better Lot than he received, or presume that God must deal better with us than he did with his own dearest Son? Can we be displeased at a conformity to our Lord and Master? Can we without shame affect to live more splendidly, or to fare more deliciously than he chose to do? Shall we fret or wail, because our Desires are crossed, our Projects defeated, our Interests any-wise prejudiced; when as his most earnest Desires, and his most painful Endeavours had so little of due and desired Success; when he was ever ready, and had so constant occasion to say, *Let not my will be done*; Can we despise that State of Meanness and Sorrow which he from the highest Sublimities of Glory and
Bea-

Beatitude was pleased to stoop unto? Can we take our selves, for the want of any present Conveniences or Comforts, to be wretched, whenas the Fountain of all Happines was destitute of all such things, and scarce did ever taste any worldly Pleasure? Are we fit or * *worthy to be his disciples*, if we will not *take up his cross and follow him*; if we will not go to his School (that School wherein he is said himself to have † *learnt obedience*) if we will not con that Lesson which he so loudly hath read out, and transcribe that Copy which he so fairly hath set before us? Can we pretend to those great Benefits, those high Privileges, those rich and excellent Rewards which he hath attained for us, and which he proposeth to us, ‡ if we will not go on toward them in that way of Patience which he hath set before us?

Can we also, if we || *consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners*, be transported with any wrathful and revengeful Passion, upon any Provocation from our Brethen? Can we hope or wish for better Usage from Men than our Lord did ever find? § Can we be much displeased with
any

* Luke 14. 27. 9. 23. Matt. 10. 38. 16. 24.

† Heb. 5. 8. ‡ Heb. 2. 9, 10. Phil. 2. 9.

|| Heb. 12. 3.

§ *Quam gravis causa sit hominis Christiani, servum pati nolle cum prior passus sit Dominus, &c. Cypr. Ep. 56.*

any Man for thwarting our Desires or Interests, for dissenting from our Conceits, for crossing our Humours, when as he (to whom all Respect and Observance was due) did meet with so little Regard or Compliance in any way; continually did encounter Repulses, Disappointments, Oppositions from the perverse and spiteful World? Can we be very jealous of our Credit, or furious when our imaginary Honour (Honour, that we never really deserved, or can justly claim, being guilty of so many great Faults and Sins) is touched with the least disgraceful Reflection, if we do well observe and mind, that the most truly, and indeed only honourable Personage (only honourable, because only innocent Person) that ever was, had his Reputation aspersed by the most odious Reproaches which deepest Envy and Malice could devise, without any grievous Resentment, or being solicitous otherwise to assert or clear it than by a constant Silence? Can we be exasperated by every petty Affront, (real or supposed) when the most noble, most courteous, most obliging Person that ever breathed upon Earth, was treacherously exposed to violence by his own Servant, shamefully deserted by his own most beloved Friends, despitefully treated by those whom he never had offended, by those
upon

upon whom he had heaped the greatest Benefits, without expressing any Anger or Displeasure against them, but yielding many signal Testimonies of tenderest Pity and Love toward them? Can we see our Lord treated like a Slave and a Thief, without any disturbance or commotion of Heart; and we vile Wretches upon every slight occasion swell with fierce Disdain, pour forth reproachful Language, execute horrible Mischief upon our Brethren? He indeed was surrounded with Injuries and Affronts; every Sin that since the foundation of Things hath been committed, was an Offence against him, and a Burthen upon him; (* *God laid upon him the iniquities of us all*) so many declared Enemies, so many Rebels, so many Persecutors, so many Murderers he had, as there have lived Men in the World; for every Sinner did in truth conspire to his Affliction and Destruction; we all in effect did Betray him, did Accuse him, did Mock, did Scourge, did Pierce and Crucifie him; yet he forgave all Offences, he died for all Persons; † *while we were yet enemies, yet sinners, he died for us*, to rescue us from Death and Misery: And shall we not then in Imitation of him, for his dear sake, in Gratitude, Respect,

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and

*Isa. 53. 6. † Rom. 5. 6, 8, 10.

and Obedience to him, be ready to bear the Infirmities of our Brethren, to forgive any small Wrongs or Offences from them; whatever they do to us, to love them, and do them what good we can? ‡ If so admirable a Pattern of Patience and Meekness so immense cannot, what is there that can oblige or move us? I conclude with those Doxologies to our so patient and meek Redeemer:

¶ *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.*

§ *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

‡ *Reperimus illi patientiam, quam pro nobis ipse deprompsit.* Tert. de Pat. 16.

¶ *Apoc. 5. 12, 13. § Apoc. 1. 5.*

O F

*Resignation to the Divine Will.*The Seventh SERMON.

LUKE XXII. 42.

* *Nevertheless let not my will, but thine be done.*

THE great Controversie, managed with such earnestness and obstinacy between God and Man, is this, whose Will shall take place, his or ours: Almighty God, by whose constant Protection and great Mercy we subsist, doth claim to himself the Authority of regulating our Practice, and disposing our Fortunes; but we affect to be our own Masters and Carvers; not willingly admitting any Law, not patiently brooking any Condition, which doth not sort with our Fancy and Pleasure: to make good his Right, God bendeth all his Forces, and applieth all proper Means both of Sweetness and Severity (persuading us by Arguments, soliciting us by Entreaties, alluring

L 2

* Matt. 26. 39.

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luring us by fair Promises, scaring us by fierce Menaces, indulging ample Benefits to us, inflicting sore Corrections on us, working in us and upon us by secret influences of Grace, by visible Dispensations of Providence) yet so it is, that commonly nothing doth avail, our Will opposing it self with invincible Resolution and Stiffness.

Here indeed the Business pincheth; herein as the chief Worth, so the main difficulty of religious Practice consisteth, in bending *that iron sinew*; in bringing our proud Hearts to stoop, and our sturdy Humours to buckle, so as to surrender and resign our Wills to the just, the wise, the gracious Will of our God, prescribing our Duty, and assigning our Lot unto us. We may accuse our Nature, but it is our Pleasure; * we may pretend Weakness, but it is Wilfulness, which is the guilty cause of our Misdemeanors; for by God's Help (which doth always prevent our Needs, and is never wanting to those who seriously desire it) we may be as good as we please, if we can please to be good; there is nothing within us that can resist, if our Wills do yield themselves up to Duty: To conquer our Reason is not hard; for
what

* Chrys. *Tom. 6. Or. 12. in 1 Cor. Or. 17. Tom. 5. Or. 28, 43.*

what Reason of Man can withstand the infinite cogency of those Motives, which induce to Obedience? What can be more easie, than by a thousand Arguments, clear as Day, to convince any Man, that to cross God's Will is the greatest absurdity in the World, and that there is no madness comparable thereto? † Nor is it difficult, if we resolve upon it, to govern any other part or power of our Nature; for what cannot we do, if we are willing? What Inclination cannot we check, what Appetite cannot we restrain, what Passion cannot we quell or moderate; what Faculty of our Soul, or Member of our Body is not obsequious to our Will? Even half the Resolution with which we pursue Vanity and Sin, would serve to engage us in the ways of Wisdom and Virtue.

Wherefore in overcoming our Will the stress lieth; this is that impregnable Fortress, which everlastingly doth hold out against all the Batteries of Reason and of Grace; which no force of Persuasion, no allurements of Favour, no discouragement of Terrour can reduce; this puny, this impotent Thing it is, which grappleth with Omnipotency, and often in a manner baffles it: And no wonder; for that God doth not intend to overpower our Will, or

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to

† *Quodcumque sibi imperavit animus obtinuit.* Sen. de Ira. 2. 12.

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to make any violent Impression on it, but only to * *draw it* (as it is in the *Prophet*) *with the cords of a man*, or by rational Inducements to win its Consent and Compliance; our Service is not so considerable to him, that he should extort it from us; nor doth he value our Happiness at so low a rate, as to obtrude it on us. His Victory indeed were no true Victory over us, if he should gain it by main Force, or without the concurrence of our Will; our Works not being our Works, if they do not issue from our Will; and our Will not being our Will, if it be not free; to compell it were to destroy it, together with all the worth of our Virtue and Obedience: † wherefore the Almighty doth suffer himself to be withstood, and beareth Repulses from us; nor commonly doth he master our Will otherwise, than by its own spontaneous Conversion and Submission to him; if ever we be conquer'd, as we shall share in the Benefit, and wear a Crown; so we must join in the Combat, and partake of the Victory, by subduing our selves: *we must take the yoke upon us*; for God is only served by Volunteers; he summoneth us by his Word, he attracteth us

* HOS. II. 4.

† Ἐπεὶ τὸτο καὶ αὐτὰ διαβάλλει τὰ ἀγαθὰ εἰ μὴ τοιαῦτα αὐτῷ δεῖν ἢ φέρεται, ὡς καὶ ἐκόντας προσδραμεῖν, καὶ χάριν ἔχειν πολλήν. Chrys. in 1 Cor. Orat. 2.

us by his Grace, but we must *freely come unto him.*

Our Will indeed of all things is most our own; the only Gift, the most proper Sacrifice we have to offer; which therefore God doth chiefly desire, doth most highly prize, doth most kindly accept from us. Seeing then our Duty chiefly moveth on this Hinge, the free submission and resignation of our Will to the Will of God; it is this Practice, which our Lord (who came to guide us in the way to Happiness, not only as a Teacher by his Word and excellent Doctrine, but as a Leader by his Actions and perfect Example) did especially set before us; as in the constant tenour of his Life, so particularly in that great Exigency which occasioned these Words, wherein, renouncing and deprecating his own Will, he did express an entire Submission to God's Will, a hearty Complacence therein, and a serious Desire that it might take Place.

For the fuller understanding of which Case, we may consider, that our Lord, as partaker of our Nature, and, *in all things* (bating Sin) *like unto us*, had a natural Human Will, attended with Senses, Appetites and Affections, apt from Objects incident to receive congruous impressions of Pleasure and Pain; so that whatever is innocently grateful and pleasant to us, that he relish'd

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with Delight, and thence did encline to embrace; whatever is distastful and afflictive to us, that he resented with Grief, and thence was moved to eschew; to this probably he was liable in a degree beyond our ordinary rate; for that in him Nature was most perfect, his Complexion very delicate, his Temper exquisitely sound and fine; for so we find, that by how much any Man's Constitution is more sound, by so much he hath a smarter gust of what is agreeable or offensive to Nature: If perhaps sometimes infirmity of Body, or distemper of Soul (a savage Ferity, a stupid Dulness, a fondness of Conceit, or stiffness of Humour, supported by wild Opinions, or vain Hopes) may keep Men from being thus affected by sensible Objects; yet in him pure Nature did work vigorously, with a clear Apprehension and lively Sense; according to the Design of our Maker, when into our Constitution he did implant those passive Faculties, disposing Objects to affect them so and so, for our Need and Advantage; if this be deemed Weakness, it is a Weakness connected with our Nature, which he therewith did take, and * *with which* (as the *Apostle* saith) *he was encompassed*. Such a Will our Lord had, and it was requisite that he should have it; that

* Ἐπεὶ καὶ αὐτὸς περιέχεται ἀδύνατον. Heb. 5. 2.

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that he thence might be qualified to discharge the principal instances of Obedience, for procuring God's Favour to us, and for setting an exact Pattern before us; for God imposing on him Duties to perform, and dispensing Accidents to endure, very cross to that natural Will, in his Compliance and Acquiescence thereto, his Obedience was thoroughly tried; his Virtue did shine most brightly; therefore (as the *Apostle* saith) * *he was in all points tempted*; thence, as to meritorious Capacity, and exemplary Influence, *he was perfected thro' suffering.*

Hence was the whole course of his Life and Conversation among Men, so designed, so modelled, as to be one continual Exercise of thwarting that Human Will, and closing with the Divine Pleasure: It was predicted of him, † *Lo I come to do thy will, O God*; and of himself he affirm'd, ‡ *I came down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me*; whereas therefore such a Practice is little seen in atchieving easie Matters, or in admitting pleasant Occurrences; it was order'd for him, that he should encounter the roughest Difficulties, and be engaged in Circumstances most harsh to natural Apprehension

L 5

prehenſion

* Heb. 4. 15. 2. 10, 18.

† Heb. 10. 7. Psal. 40. 7.

‡ John 6. 38. 5. 30. 4. 34.

prehension and Appetite; so that if we trace the footsteps of his Life from the fordid Manger to the bloody Cross, we can hardly mark any thing to have befallen him apt to satisfy the Will of Nature. Nature liketh Respect, and loatheth Contempt; therefore was he born of mean Parentage, and in a most homely Condition; therefore did he live in no Garb, did assume no Office, did exercise no Power, did meddle in no Affairs which procure to Men Consideration and Regard; therefore an Impostor, a Blasphemer, a Sorcerer, a loose Companion, a seditious Incendiary were the Titles of Honour, and the Elogies of Praise conferred on him; therefore was he exposed to the lash of every slanderous, every scurrilous, every petulant and ungoverned Tongue.

Nature doth affect the good Opinion, and good Will of Men, especially when due in grateful Return for great Courtesy and Beneficence; nor doth any thing more grate thereon, than abuse of Kindness; therefore could he (the World's great Friend and Benefactor) say, * *the world hateth me*; therefore were those whom he, with so much Charity and Bounty had instructed, had fed, had cured of Diseases (both corporal and spiritual)

* John 15. 18, 25.

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al) so ready to clamour, and commit Outrage upon him; therefore could he thus expostulate, † *Many good works have I shewed you from my father, for which of those works do you stone me?* Therefore did his Kindred slight him, therefore did his Disciples abandon him, therefore did the || grand Traitor issue from his own Bosome; therefore did that whole Nation, which he chiefly sought and laboured to save, conspire to prosecute him with most rancorous Spite and cruel Misusage.

Nature loveth plentiful Accommodations, and abhorreth to be pinched with any Want; therefore was extream Penury appointed to him; he had no Revenue, no Estate, no certain Livelyhood, not *so much as a house where to lay his head, or a Piece of Mony to discharge the Tax for it; he owed his ordinary Support to Alms, or voluntary Beneficence; he was to seek his Food from a fig-tree on the way; and sometimes was beholden for it to the Courtisie of Publicans; διήκεις ἐν λύχνοις, † he was (saith St. Paul) a Beggar for us.*

Nature delighteth in Ease, in Quiet, in Liberty; therefore did he spend his Days in continual Labour, in restless Travel, in endless Vagrancy, * *going about and doing*

† Joh. 10. 32. || Joh. 13. 18. § Mat. 8. 20. 17. 25.
21. 19. Luk. 8. 3. ‡ 2 Cor. 8. 9. * Joh. 4. 16. Mat.
4. 23. 8. 35. Act. 10. 38.

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doing good; ever hastning thither, whither the Needs of Men did call, or their Benefit invite; therefore did he † *take on him the form of a servant*, and was among his own Followers, *as one that ministreth*; therefore he *pleased not himself*, but suited his Demeanour to the State and Circumstances of things, complied with the Manners and Fashions, comported with the Humours and Infirmities of Men.

Nature coveteth good Success to its Designs and Undertakings, hardly brooking to be disappointed and defeated in them: therefore was he put to water dry Sticks, and to wash *Negroes*; that is, to instruct a most dull and stupid, to reform a most perverse and stubborn Generation; therefore his ardent Desires, his solicitous Cares, his painful Endeavours for the good of Men did obtain so little Fruit; had indeed a contrary Effect, rather aggravating their Sins than removing them, rather hardning than turning their Hearts, rather plunging them deeper into Perdition, than rescuing them from it: Therefore so much in vain did he, in numberless miraculous Works, display his Power and Goodness, convincing few, converting fewer by them; therefore although he taught with most powerful Authority,
with

† Phil. 2. 7. Luk. 22. 27. Mark. 6. 6. Mat. 21. 28.

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with most charming Gracefulness, with most convincing Evidence, yet, || *Who* (could he say) *hath believed our report?* Though he most earnestly did invite and allure Men to him, offering the richest Boons that Heaven it self could dispense, yet, * *Ye will not* (was he forced to say) *come unto me that ye may be saved*; altho' with assiduous Fervency of Affection he strove to reclaim them from Courses tending to their Ruin, yet how he prospered, sad Experience declareth, and we may learn from that doleful Complaint, § *How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, but ye would not*: *ἐν ἐθείῳ ἤσαρε*, your Will did not concur, your Will did not submit.

In fine, natural Will seeketh Pleasure, and shunneth Pain; ‡ But what Pleasure did he taste; what Inclination, what Appetite, what Sense did he gratifie? How did he feast, or revel? How, but in tedious Fastings, in frequent Hungers, by passing whole Nights in Prayer, and Retirement for Devotion upon the cold Mountains? What Sports had he, what Recreation did he take, but feeling incessant Gripes of Compassion, and wearisome

roving

|| Luk. 4. 22, 32. John 12. 38. * Joh. 5. 40.
 § Luk. 13. 34. 19, 42. ‡ Mark 1. 13. 35. Luk. 5.
 16. Joh. 4. 6, 31. Luk. 6. 12. Mat. 14. 23.

roving in quest of the * lost Sheep? In what Conversation could he divert himself, but among those, whose doltish Incapacity, and froward Humour, did wring from his Patience those Words, † *How long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you?* What Musick did he hear? What but the Ratlings of clamorous Obloquy, and furious Accusations against him? to be desperately maligned, to be insolently mocked, to be styled a King, and treated as a Slave; to be spit on, to be buffeted, to be scourged, to be drenched with Gall, to be crowned with Thorns, to be nailed to a Cross; these were the Delights which our Lord enjoyed, these the sweet Comforts of his Life, and the notable Prosperities of his Fortune: Such a Portion was allotted to him, the which he did accept from God's Hand with all patient Submission, with perfect Contentedness, with exceeding Alacrity, never repining at it, never complaining of it, never flinching from it, or fainting under it; but proceeding on in the Performance of all his Duty, and Prosecution of his great Designs, with undaunted Courage, with unwearied Industry, with undisturbed Tranquillity and Satisfaction of Mind.

Had indeed his Condition and Fortune been otherwise framed; had he come in-

* Matt. 18, 12. † Mat. 17, 17.

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to the World qualify'd with a noble Ex-
traction; had he lived in a splendid Equi-
page, had he enjoyed a plentiful Estate
and a fair Reputation, had he been fa-
voured and careſſed by Men; had he found
a Current of prosperous Succeſs, had Safe-
ty, Eaſe and Pleaſure waited on him:
Where had been the pious Reſignation
of his Will, where the precious Merit of
his Obedience, where the glorious Luſtre
of his Example? How then had our Frail-
ty in him become victorious over all its
Enemies; how had he triumphed over
the Sollicitations and Allurements of the
Fleſh; over the Frowns and Flatteries of
the World; over the Malice and Fury of
Hell; how then could he have ſo demon-
ſtrated his Immenſe Charity towards us,
or laid ſo mighty Obligations upon us?

Such in general was the Caſe, and ſuch
the Deportment of our Lord; but there
was ſomewhat peculiar and beyond all this
occurring to him, which drew forth the
Words of our Text: God had tempered
for him a Potion of all the moſt bitter and
loathſome Ingredients that could be; a Drop
whereof no Man ever hath, or could endure
to ſip; for he was not only to undergo what-
ever Load humane Rage could impoſe, of ig-
nominious Diſgrace, and grievous Pain; but
to feel diſmal Agonies of Spirit, and thoſe *un-*
known

|| Δι' ἀγνώσων σε παθημάτων ἐλέησαν ἡμᾶς κύριε.
Lit. Gr.

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*known Sufferings, which God alone could inflict, God only could sustain: * Behold and see, he might well say, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me; wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger?* He was to labour with Pangs of Charity, and through his heart to be pierced with deepest Commiseration of our wretched Case: He was to crouch under the Burthen of all the Sins (the numberless most heinous Sins and Abominations) ever committed by Mankind: he was to pass thro' the hottest Furnace of divine Vengeance, and by his Blood to quench the Wrath of Heaven flaming out against Iniquity; he was to stand (as it were) before the Mouth of Hell, belching Fire and Brimstone on his Face: His Grief was to supply the Defects of our Remorse, and his suffering in those few Moments to countervail the eternal Torments due to us: He was to bear the hiding of God's Face, and an Eclipse of that favourable Aspect in which all Bliss doth reside; a Case which he that so perfectly understood, could not but infinitely resent; these things with the clearest Apprehension he saw coming on him; and no wonder that our Nature started at so ghastly a Sight; or that humane Instinct should dictate that Petition, *Father, if thou wilt, let this cup pass from me;* Words
im-

* Lam. 2. 12.

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implying his most real Participation of our Infirmary; Words denoting the Height of those sad Evils which encompassed him, with his lively and lowly Resentment of them; Words informing us, how we should entertain God's Chastisements, and whence we must seek Relief of our Pressures (that we should receive them, not with a scornful Neglect or sullen Insensibility, but with a meek Contrition of Soul; that we should entirely depend on God's Pleasure for Support under them, or a Releasement from them) Words which, in Conjunction with those following, do shew how instantly we should quash and over-rule any Insurrection of natural Desire against the Command or Providence of God. We must not take that Prayer to signify any Purpose in our Lord to shift off his Passion, or any wavering in Resolution about it; for he could not any-wise mean to undo that, which he knew done with God before the World's Foundation; he would not unsettle that, which was by his own free Undertaking, and irreversible Decree; He that so often with Satisfaction did foretel this Event, who with so * *earnest desire* longed for its Approach; who with that Sharpness of Indignation did rebuke his Friend offering to divert him from it; who did again repress St. Peter's.

* *Ἐπιθυμία ἐπεθύμην*, Luk. 22. 15.

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ter's Animosity with that serious Expostulation, † *The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?* who had advisedly laid such Trains for its Accomplishment, would he decline it? Could that Heart all burning with Zeal for God and Charity to Men, admit the least Thought or Motion of Averseness from drinking that Cup, which was the Sovereign Medicine administered by divine Wisdom for the Recovery of God's Creation? No; * had he spake with such Intent, Legions of Angels had flown to his Rescue; that Word which framed the Worlds, which stilled the Tempests, which ejected Devils, would immediately have scattered his Enemies, and dashed all their Projects against him; wherefore those Words did not proceed from Intention, but as from Instinct, and for Instruction; importing, that what our humane Frailty was apt to suggest, that his divine Virtue was more ready to smother; neither did he vent the former, but that he might express the latter.

He did express it in real Effect; immediately with all Readiness addressing himself to receive that unsavoury Potion; he reached out his Hand for it, yielding fair Opportunity and Advantages to his Persecutors; he lifted it up to his Mouth, innocently provoking their Envy and Malice,

† Joh. 18. 11. * Matt. 26. 53.

lice; he drank it off with a most steady Calmness, and sweet Composure of Mind, with the Silence, the Simplicity, the Meekness of a Lamb carry'd to the Slaughter; no fretful Thought rising up, no angry Word breaking forth, but a clear Patience, enlivened with a warm Charity, shining in all his Behaviour, and through every Circumstance of his Passion.

Such in his Life, such at his Death was the Practice of our Lord; in Conformity whereto we also readily should undertake whatever God proposeth, we gladly should accept whatever God offereth, we vigorously should perform whatever God enjoineth, we patiently should undergo whatever God imposeth or inflicteth, how cross soever any Duty, any Dispensation may prove to our carnal Sense or Humour.

To do thus, the Contemplation of this Example may strongly engage us: For if our Lord had not his Will, can we in Reason expect, can we in Modesty desire to have ours? Must we be cockered and pleased in every thing, when as he was treated so courselly, and crossed in all things? Can we grudge at any kind of Service or Sufferance; can we think much (for our Trial, our Exercise, our Correction) to bear a little Want, a little Disgrace, a little Pain, when the Son of God was put to discharge the hardest Tasks, to endure the sorest Adversities?

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But farther to enforce these Duties, be pleased to cast a Glance on two Considerations. 1. What the Will is to which, 2. Who the Willer is to whom we must submit.

V. 1. What is the Will of God? Is it any thing unjust, unworthy, or dishonourable, any thing incommodious or hurtful, any thing extreamly difficult, or intolerably grievous that God requireth of us, to do or bear? No; he willeth nothing from us, or to us, which doth not best become us, and most behove us; which is not attended with Safety, with Ease, with the solidest Profit, the fairest Reputation, and the sweetest Pleasure.

Two things he willeth, that we should be good, and that we should be happy; the first in order to the second; for that Virtue is the certain Way, and a necessary Qualification to Felicity.

The will of God, saith St. Paul, † is our sanctification; what is that? What, but that the Decays of our Frame, and the Defacements of God's Image within us should be repaired; that the Faculties of our Soul should be restored to their Original Integrity and Vigour; that from most wretched Slaveries we should be translated into a happy Freedom, yea, into a glorious Kingdom; that from despicable Beggary and Baseness we should be

† 1 Thess. 4. 3.

be advanced to substantial Wealth and sublime Dignity; that we should be cleansed from the foulest Defilements, and decked with the goodliest Ornaments; that we should be cured of most loathsome Diseases, and settled in a firm Health of Soul; that we should be delivered from those brutish Lusts, and those devilish Passions, which create in us a Hell of darkness, of confusion, of vexation; which dishonour our Nature, deform our Soul, ruffle our Mind, and wrack our Conscience; that we should be endowed with those worthy Dispositions and Affections, which do constitute in our Hearts a Heaven of Light, of Order, of Joy and Peace; dignifie our Nature, beautifie our Soul, clarifie and chear our Mind; that we should eschew those Practices, which never go without a Retinue of woful Mischiefs and Sorrows, embracing those which always yield abundant Fruits of Convenience and Comfort; that, in short, we should become Friends of God, fit to converse with Angels, and capable of Paradise.

God (saith St. Paul again) * *willeth all men to be saved*; † *He willeth not* (saith St. Peter) *that any man should perish*; He saith it himself, yea, he sweareth it, ‡ *that he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked should turn from his way and live*: And what is this Will? what, but that we should obtain all the good
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* 1 Tim. 2. 7. † 2 Pct. 3. 9. ‡ Ezek. 33. 11.

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whereof we are capable; that we should be filled with Joy, and crowned with Glory; that we should be fixed in an immovable state of Happiness, in the perpetual enjoyment of God's Favour, and in the Light of his blisful Presence: that we should be rid of all the Evils to which we are liable; that we should be released from inextricable Chains of Guilt, from incurable Stings of Remorse, from being irrecoverably engaged to pass a disconsolate Eternity in utter Darkness, and extreme Woe? Such is God's Will; to such purposes every Command, every Dispensation of God (how grim, how rough soever it may seem) doth tend; and do we refuse to comply with that good Will; do we set against it a Will of our own, affecting Things unworthy of us, Things unprofitable to us, Things prejudicial to our best Interests; Things utterly baneful to our Souls? Do we reject the Will that would save us, and adhere to a Will that would ruine us; a foolish and a senseless Will, which slighting the immense Treasures of Heaven, the unfading Glories of God's Kingdom, the ineffable Joys of Eternity, doth catch at specious Nothings, doth pursue mischievous Trifles; a shadow of base Profit, a smock of vain Honour, a flash of sordid Pleasure; which passeth away like **the mirth of fools,*
or

* Eccles. 7. 6.

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or the crackling of thorns, leaving only soot, black and bitter behind it?

But at least e'er we do thus, let us consider, whose Will it is, that requireth our Compliance.

It is the Will of him, † whose Will did found the Earth and rear the Heavens; whose Will sustaineth all things in their Existence and Operation; whose Will is the great Law of the World, which universal Nature in all its motions doth observe; which reigneth in Heaven, the blessed Spirits adoring it, which swayeth in Hell it self, the cursed Fiends trembling at it; and shall we alone (we pitiful Worms, crawling on Earth) presume to murmur, or dare to kick against it?

It is the Will of our Maker, who, together with all our other Faculties, did create and confer on us the very power of Willing; and shall we turn the Work of his Hands, the gift of his Bounty against him?

It is the Will of our Preserver, who together with all that we are or have, continually doth uphold our very Will it self; so that without employing any positive Force, meerly by letting us fall out of his Hand, he can send us and it back to nothing; and shall our Will clash with that, on which it so wholly dependeth; without

† Psal. 148. 5. Apoc. 4. 11.

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out which it cannot subsist one moment, or move one step forward in Action?

It is the Will of our Sovereign Lord, who, upon various indisputable Accounts, hath a just right to Govern us, and an absolute Power to dispose of us; ought we not therefore to say with old *Eli*, * *It is the Lord, let him do to me as it seemeth good to him?* Is it not extreme Iniquity, is it not monstrous Arrogance for us, in derogation to his Will, to pretend giving Law, or picking a Station to our selves? Do we not manifestly incur high Treason against the King of Heaven by so invading his Office, usurping his Authority, snatching his Sceptre into our Hands, and setting our Wills in his Throne?

It is the Will of our Judge, from whose Mouth our Doom must proceed, awarding Life or Death, Weal or Woe unto us; and what Sentence can we expect, what Favour can we pretend to, if we presumptuously shall offend, oppose that Will, which is the supreme Rule of Justice, and sole Fountain of Mercy?

It is the Will of our Redeemer, who hath bought us with an inestimable Price, and with infinite Pains hath rescued us from miserable Captivity under most barbarous Enemies, that obeying his Will we
might

* 1 Sam. 3. 8.

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might command our own, and serving him we might enjoy perfect Freedom; And shall we, declining his Call and Conduct out of that unhappy State, bereave him of his Purchase, frustrate his Undertakings, and forfeit to our selves the benefit of so great Redemption?

It is the Will of our best Friend, who loveth us much better than we do love our selves; who is concerned for our Welfare as his own dearest Interest, and greatly delighteth therein; who by innumerable Experiments hath demonstrated an excess of Kindness to us; who in all his Dealings with us purely doth aim at our good, never charging any Duty on us, or dispensing any Event to us, so much with intent to exercise his Power over us, as to express his Goodness toward us; who never * *doth afflict or grieve us* more against our Will than against his own Desire; never indeed but when Goodness it self calleth for it, and even Mercy doth urge thereto; to whom we are much obliged, that he vouchsafeth to Govern and Guide us, our Service being altogether unprofitable to him, his Governance exceedingly beneficial to us: And doth not such a Will deserve Regard, may it not demand Compliance from us? to neglect or infringe it, what is it; is it not palpable Folly, is it

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* Lam. 3. 39.

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not foul Disingenuity, is it not detestable Ingratitude?

So doth every relation of God recommend his Will to us; and each of his Attributes doth no less; for,

It is the Will of him; who is most Holy, or whose Will is essential Rectitude: how then can we thwart it, without being stained with the Guilt, and wounded with a sense of great Irregularity and Iniquity?

It is the Will of him, who is perfectly Just; who therefore cannot but assert his own righteous Will, and avenge the Violation thereof: is it then advisable to drive him to that Point by wilful Provocation; or to run upon the edge of necessary Severity?

It is the Will of him, who is infinitely Wise; who therefore doth infallibly know what is best for us, what doth most besit our Capacities and Circumstances; what in the final Result will conduce to our greatest Advantage and Comfort: shall we then prefer the Dreams of our vain Mind before the Oracles of his Wisdom; shall we, forsaking the Direction of his unerring Will, follow the impulse of our giddy Humour?

It is the Will of him, who is immensely Good and Benign; whose Will therefore can be no other than good Will to

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us; who can mean nothing thereby but to derive Bounty and Mercy on us: Can we then fail of doing well, if we put our selves entirely into his Hands; are we not our own greatest Enemies, in withstanding his gracious Intentions?

It is finally the Will of him, who is uncontrollably Powerful; whose Will therefore must prevail one way or other: either with our Will, or against it, either so as to bow and satisfie us, or so as to break and plague us; for, * *My counsel* (saith he) *shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.* As to his Dispensations, we may fret, we may wail, we may bark at them, but we cannot alter or avoid them: sooner may we by our Moans check the Tides, or by our Cries stop the Sun in his carriere, than divert the current of Affairs, or change the state of Things established by God's high Decree; what he layeth on, no Hand can remove; what he hath destined, no Power can reverse; our Anger therefore will be ineffectual, our Impatience will have no other fruit than to aggravate our Guilt, and augment our Grief.

As to his Commands, we may † *lift up our selves against them*, we may fight stoutly, we may in a sort prove Conquerors; but it will be a miserable Victory, the
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* Isa. 46. 11. † Dan. 5. 23.

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Trophies whereof shall be erected in Hell, and stand upon the Ruins of our Happiness; for while we insult over abused Grace, we must fall under incensed Justice: If God cannot fairly procure his Will of us in way of due Obedience, he will surely execute his Will upon us in way of righteous Vengeance; if we do not surrender our Wills to the overtures of his Goodness, we must submit our Backs to the strokes of his Anger: He must reign over us, if not as over loyal Subjects to our Comfort, yet as over stubborn Rebels to our Confusion; for this in that Case will be our Doom, and the last Words God will design to spend upon us, * *Those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me.*

† *Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

* Luke 19. 27.

† Heb. 13. 20.

F I N I S.

